PARTISAN!

'THE GAY ONE' | ISSUE #10 | JUNE '25

It gets better!

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About Partisan:

Partisan is the official publication of the Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO). We are a monthly journal of the 'partyist left' in Australia, and an organ of independent, communist journalism.

Alongside the RCO, we fight for a reunification of the left into a party that can carry out the tasks of the communist and workers movement: the establishment of a democratic republic and the dissolution of the capitalist prison-states. ■

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Who is the "RCO"?

The Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO) is a pre-party formation that works towards the re-unification of the socialist left in Australia into a single, mass communist party. We come from diverse political backgrounds and schools of Marxist thought, yet we are united by a common program.

We welcome rigorous debate and disagreement and are open to factions, yet act as one organisation. We are guided by the principle of diversity of thought, and unity of action. The capitalist mode of production is at the root of every social, environmental, and economic crisis today.

We fight for the liberation of queer people, Aboriginal people, and women, a liberation which can only be achieved through the destruction of the capitalist system. We are united by our determination to fight the capitalist mode of production at every turn, and our total commitment to its abolition. We are communists, unapologetically and without reservation.

We engage in every form of proletarian activity, whether protests or union drives, yet do not trail social movements; we aim in every instance to build the base for a mass workers' party, necessary to intervene in the class struggle and advance the communist movement. ■

Partyism:

That section of the communist movement which sees the re-unification of communist forces into a single party representative of the movement as its primary task.

We do not reject the rest of the left - instead, we aim to work through the existing left to build a communist party. Such a party is united by a shared Marxist program, that is, a program for leading the working class to power and overthrowing the capitalist system.

For this reason, we eschew the malignant sect labels which are often thrown around amongst the left. We view all communist organisations are being "sects" - factional organisations which recruit to a particular tendency and viewpoint, as opposed to a Marxist program.

We aim to unite the sects into a party, being an organisation representative of the movement as a whole, and the political weapon of the working class. ■

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Rainbows after rainstorms

One could not be blamed for becoming depressed by recent events. After the stunning victory of Donald Trump in the 2024 US elections, it seems like the sky is going to fall on the heads of the working class, just as it was fated to in 2016. But hope is not lost: it does get better. In spite of attacks against the social and political rights of LGBTQ+ workers internationally, there is still a growing mass of queer proletarians who are deeply discontent with the bourgeois moralist "queer rights" movement.

Communism and the queer liberation movement are inextricably linked, and we must strive to make clear the intertwined nature of these emancipatory struggles.

It is important to critique the pitfalls of the contemporary left in order to develop a communist program capable of responding to the material needs and concerns of queer proletarians in a manner which furthers the overarching goal of the complete emancipation of the global proletariat. Many solutions put forward by anarchists, socialists and communists are wholly unsatisfactory. Take, for example, grouplets like the Queer Killjoys, who infamously, and embarrassingly, boasted about trashing a stall of Socialist Alternative's. What strategy do they present in opposition to SAlt's (admittedly sorely lacking) approach to queer liberation? A zine distributed by them - the closest thing to a work of theoretical value read by most grouplets of a similar calibre, states:

"The reality is that a fight for true trans liberation will likely mean material sacrifices for a lot of us trans people who benefit from living in a privileged position in a settler imperial core... It might see you stealing from a pharmacy, burning a white supremacist's car, smashing the windows of a transphobe's office, or punching a cop in the face. It might mean undertaking a direct action with a material impact that supports poor trans kids, that then lands you in a prison that misgenders you and holds you in solitary confinement for the 'safety' of the broader prison community."

At no point in this statement do they make reference to the only class force capable of bringing about the totalising structural, social change necessary for queer (and thus trans) liberation. The political attitude present within is one of a highly unstable, dangerous individualist action fetish; where the single self is the political centre, and their 'autonomous' actions are all that is required for a spontaneous form of identity-emancipation. In the broadest possible sense, communists uphold queer liberation for the same principle that we put forth strategies for Indigenous and women's liberation: they are sections of the working class, and we strive for the self-emancipation of the working class.

Communists, in presenting a revolutionary program for the emancipation of the entire class through its self-abolition, must strive always to reflect the emancipation of the queer proletariat through this project. Historically, we have failed to do so. Although communists have spearheaded some of the most resolute charges for queer liberation, we have often failed to address and clarify, in comprehensive theoretical and practical terms, the question of queer liberation. In an epoch of reaction, recession, and international instability, this edition of Partisan is part of our small contribution to the project of doing so. While things might seem bad now, you can't have a rainbow without the rain. ■

Ciao,
Partisan Staff

Exploring the RCO's inaugural Marxism Fringe conference

Andrew Martin of Red Ant provides a report on their experience at the RCO's inaugural session of Marxism Fringe.

The Revolutionary Communist Organisation (RCO) held their inaugural Marxism Fringe Conference on the last day of the Easter weekend. The conference was held as an adjunct of Socialist Alternative's Marxism conference. The RCO is inspired by the formation of the German Social Democratic Party of the late 19th century and the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) in the UK.

Advertised as an "extension on the Marxism conference" it was really held in opposition to it. In total 28 attended, with several attendees from Socialist Alternative interjecting throughout the conference. There was a lot of back-and-forth between the speakers and the audience.

The presence of Arthur Dent (Albert Langer) added to the tension. Dent is a perennial student radical who was prominent in the movement against the Vietnam war in the late 60s and early 70s. He never missed a moment to denounce the speakers as being "on the wrong side of history".

The RCO is a very youthful organisation. Having split from Socialist Alliance, it re-grouped with Unite, a group of anarcho-communists in Brisbane. Branches soon formed in Melbourne and Newcastle. In Melbourne the RCO emerged from a high school grouping, the 'Collective of Leninist Youth,' formed by students who finished their education in lockdown.

There were three talks at the conference: What is Imperialism, and What Does it Mean for us? Marx and Engels Critique of Sectarian Marxism and finally a History of Partyism.

The RCO speaker Anthony Furia presented a solid case on imperialism, outlining the unequal exchange between the Global North and the Global South and arguing that imperialism can't be reduced to a single mode of capital accumulation but is a totality of global production processes. Neither can imperialism, Furia argued, be reduced to a policy of military power between competing blocks of national capital.

He critiqued Socialist Alternative's position of drawing an equal's sign between all states within the world imperialist system. He stated that any successful socialist revolution would be forced to make compromises, and that the "prospects of success are devastatingly thin," but that revolution remains a necessary task for the liberation of all humanity.

Editor of Jacobin in Australia, Daniel Lopez, spoke next on the example of Marx and Engels in their fight against sectarianism.

He outlined the similarities between Lenin and Marx in their definition of sectarianism,

that they generally strove for unity. For example, it took 25 years before the First International split with the Anarchists. Lopez spoke of the importance of establishing praxis, a living theory of action, not a sterile dogma.

Representing Red Ant, Motega spoke next on sectarianism. His contention was that all socialist organising has its roots in religion, that there are theological undertones to the practice of socialist movements. Communist parties exist within an inherited ecosystem that is idealistic.

He pointed out that the radical left has failed to develop an independent institutional position in society. All radical left organisations in Australia have been tied in some way or another to the Labor Party, which has been heavily influenced by the Catholic church. The 1955 split in the Labor Party, rather than opening up a space where the left could advance and develop its own sphere of existence, did the very opposite, and the right seized the advantage.

Motega pointed out that the dynamics of left sectarianism are not separate from religious sectarianism. This is demonstrated by the view of many left sects that "We are saved by faith alone", faith in the chosen leader, in the program etc.

Mike McNair from the Communist Party of Great Britain (Provisional Central Committee) spoke next, making some valuable points.

He stated:

1. Socialism is a powerful idea only if connected to the working class which, because of its relationship to the means of production, is driven to collectivism.
2. There is a fundamental correctness in the strategic orientation of Marxism.

McNair argued that the anti-sectarianism of mass party politics can itself produce sectarianism by trying to circumvent the division of the left rather than resolve it. Mass party politics can produce "anti-sectarian" sectarianism.

He also stated the success of mass politics doesn't necessarily resolve sectarianism: "*A rising tide lifts all boats is not always true—overcoming sectarianism depends on conscious decisions being made.*"

RCO's speaker Brunhilda's talk on Partyism outlined an emerging trend in party building, but one that is diffuse. "*Partyism stands out with a remarkable lack of a clear definition*," she said.

Brunhilda noted that "*The Communist Party is ... the highest form of working-class organisation—for which there is no substitute". But Brun noted that given the contradictions of world capitalism, communist parties come under immense pressure, leading to liquidationist tendencies. It is therefore important to build "a revolutionary multi-faction fighting nucleus within the party against liquidationists.*"

Brunhilda used the CPGB and a few other northern European organisations as examples of the development of the "Partyist" perspective. A basic tenet of the party is that it has a minimum/maximum program—it recruits and organises on the minimum to build a mass base, but in revolutionary upheaval fulfils the maximum as the masses radicalise through seizing power.

It appears that the RCO is still in the process of establishing its roots and going through the process of cadre accumulation. Its critique of imperialism and its outward approach of engaging with the wider left is an encouraging aspect of its development. ■

Cover Image: RCO comrades in Melbourne. Photo: Red Ant.

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Tensions mount after Labor sweep at federal election

Anthony Albanese claims a win after the federal election. Photo: Saeed Khan/AFP

Labor won an unexpected landslide victory during the May 3rd Federal election. Despite this, Labor doesn't quite have the "mandate" it claims to have, and this victory has done little to suppress the mounting tensions both within the Labor Party and the labor movement overall. ***Claire S*** *writes on the Labor victory and prospects for militant organising in the unions.*

During the May 3rd Federal election, the Australian Labor Party (ALP) won an unexpected and historic landslide victory against the Coalition. Following this, the Liberal-National Coalition (LNP) has been relegated to largely rural seats, and the Nationals seem poised to overtake an ever more conservative-trending Liberal Party as the leaders of the Coalition.

Expecting only a narrow majority at best or a minority government at worst, the broad liberal-progressive milieu in Australia was elated at the success of Labor in the election. Now, says the petit-bourgeois progressive, now the ALP have been granted the full mandate of the Australian population. They may now push through a swathe of "progressive legislation" they have had to keep hidden.

These liberal-progressive types like to forget Labor's poor history of "progressivism," especially in the realm of industrial relations (wage suppression through the Prices and Income Accords, their iron-fisted judiciary absolutism in the face of blatantly illegal union-busting by Patrick Stevedores in 1998, and so on). This delusion stems from the fact these petit-bourgeois progressives are just that; petit-bourgeois, or, more simply, not the usual subjects of Labor's committed managerialism and quest for total union corporatism.

These progressive types, whether they be members of Labor, the Greens, or even some lonely rank-and-file Teal voters (presumably the ones that are smart enough to know the word "bureaucracy" does not mean "a room with more than ten people in it") seem to truly believe that the ALP has had its hands tied, and now the gloves are coming off. What this fabled progressive legislation actually entails remains to be seen. What is rather easy to see, however, is that there is a growing fissure between the ALP and its more assertive union donors and unionised supporters, and this fissure is growing wider and more intense with recent escalations that are likely to continue with the ALP's landslide election victory.

Labor's strategy of passive appeal to state power and the law to keep the unions in line while maintaining their mutual relationship has been thrown to the wayside, and now (not in quite the same way) the gloves are really coming off. While its true the ALP is definitely going somewhere, perhaps even somewhere new, that place is not the iron-clad worker's utopia the malaise of petit-bourgeois careerists and loyalist Labor Left tome-thumpers seem to want to assure us of.

The calcified bureaucracy of the ALP has lashed out with increasing hostility at the union movement, which the ALP has courted for political donations and legitimacy since its founding. The right-most sectors of the party seem eager to poison the roots that bind the unions' mutual ties to the ALP, and the ALP's own arbitration regime enforced by the Fair Work Commission (FWC) and the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU). In contrast, they have made extraordinary efforts to expand the security apparatus of the state and to strengthen Australia's status as an eager participant in US-aligned imperialist projects.

The NSW Labor Government under Premier Chris Minns—a devout catholic and a member of Labor's Right faction—has repeatedly refused to negotiate with representatives from

the Rail, Bus and Tram Union (RBTU) and the Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation (ASMOF). Opting not to show up to scheduled negotiations in order to drag any finalisation of already pitiful enterprise agreements through the mud for as long as possible, telling outright lies to the media, and—in the case of ASMOF—has been complicit in intimidation of unionised doctors and nurses by security officers at public hospitals harassing staff under threats of removal from hospital grounds if they fail to remove union pins, posters, and other union symbolism.

The Minns government, of course, had their excuses for their anti-union crusade. Slinging everything from tried-and-true neoliberal budget-hawking; claiming a pay rise for both the RBTU and ASMOF workers in line with inflation would "bankrupt" the entire state, to Minns' commitment to "not bow to unions". However, Minns was more than happy to discard his pious commitment to the sanctity of a budget surplus to grant the notoriously corrupt NSW Police Force a 39% pay rise over the next four years without so much as verbal pushback.

On the federal level, Labor has taken similar steps to curtail working class power, most notably by pushing through 'emergency' legislation in lockstep with the LNP in order to unilaterally place the CFMEU into administration and sidestep any existing legal processes, which the ALP claimed would take "too long" to resolve. Not only that, the ALP has turned its vigour toward aiding and abetting Israel's genocidal war in Gaza, ensuring the strength of the AUKUS deal by making closed-door assurances to the US and UK, paying lip service to the Queensland LNP's inquisition against trans care for juveniles, and granting ASIO the status of an independent agency by decoupling it from the Department of Home Affairs (and whatever paper-thin institutional oversight that may have come with it) and placing it alongside the Federal Police under the sole oversight of the Attorney General's office.

Outside of the heights of state and federal politics, the friction between the ALP, the national union bureaucracy of the ACTU, and the more militant sections of the union movement can be seen even in the most immediate spheres of politics. On May 1st, in front of NSW Parliament in Sydney, sacked CFMEU delegate Dennis McNamara delivered a fiery speech; decrying war, imperialism, and the attacks against the CFMEU by the ALP (primarily on the basis of administration being an attack on the rank-and-file, instead of falling back on defending CFMEU secretaries who have now plead guilty to corruption charges, which was a breath of fresh air). McNamara called for global working class solidarity, political independence from the ACTU and FWC, unity in the face of incoming "fascist attacks," and solidarity with the Palestinian struggle.

McNamara's speech attracted widespread applause from the crowd, which contrasted massively with the speaker who came to the stage immediately after; Vanessa Seagrove. Seagrove, who is the Assistant Secretary of Unions NSW and a member of Labor Left, ran blatant apologia for Labor; finger-wagging in the rain to the now silent crowd that while "Labor might be doing things you may not like" the ALP is still "a party for the working class". Instead of lambasting the ALP for their attacks on workers (which Seagrove would like you to think of as "things you may not like") the focus of the short speech fell to on Labor's 'Same Job, Same Wage' amendments to the Fair Work Act; the very same act that cemented the modern ACTU-FWC arbitration framework, and the same act the ALP amended in order to force the CFMEU into administration.

Before the next speaker stepped up (Secretary of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA), Paul Keating)—who in stark contrast to Seagrove called for the outright abolition of the Fair Work Act, and an end to the oppressive arbitration arrangement unions are welded to—the MC made sure to announce to the crowd that "Vanessa [Seagrove] supports the workers' struggle," as if Seagrove herself had not demonstrated the opposite quite openly.

The contrast between each speakers' rhetoric and loyalties is a microcosm of modern Laborism; the internal factions within the ALP itself are presently incapable or uninterested in mending the fissures between large sections of their union support base and the party itself. With the right wing of Labor moving toward a policy of outwardly undermining already heavily diminished union power and legitimacy, and Labor Left (which the CFMEU has traditionally been firmly aligned with) offering nothing more than deflection and lectures to the union rank-and-file, it is clear not only that the current state of affairs cannot continue forever, but that Labor is, if anything, trending away from any sort of "liberal-progressive" platform or full reconciliation with their militant union base.

What should communists do if the militant unions—whether it be their rank-and-file or sections of the union bureaucracy—politically

separate themselves from the ALP? Are Labor internally committed to risking such a political upset? If the current tensions continue to escalate, what should we do in the extraordinary event that sections of the union movement not only politically split from the ALP, but also seek to truly decouple themselves from the ACTU? What would it look like? Is it even remotely possible? While the desire within the workers' movement for a political divorce with Labor alongside the abolition of the FWA is palpable, we must be careful not to fall into promoting a split between the ACTU and their constituent unions.

This is not to say the ACTU presently acts for the furtherance of working class political power, but the cleavage of a centralised union movement into a myriad of squabbling industry interests groups without any overarching organisational infrastructure to coordinate joint action will most certainly greatly weaken the working class in the long run. All active attempts to split the union movement between the most militant unions and the rest are to be avoided at all costs. Agitation within unions controlled by a politically backward union bureaucracy is just as important as action alongside the most politically advanced members of the proletariat.

With the unity of the workers' movement in mind, we must face the unfortunate reality that—while these tensions represent great potential for working class political independence—if this cleavage between Labor and the conscious worker occurs in the immediate future, communists will not have the strength or cohesion necessary to be able to make any sort of successful intervention at a desirable scale into the unions where the conscious worker at large resides and organises. While the sects remain divided, and act only on their most primal reflexes of appealing to mass political spontaneity, the present moment will be relegated to a historical status of periodic remembrance in the sect papers, who will write for years to come about the "lessons learned" from the "great union split from Labor". We have time for now, we best make as much use of it as we possibly can to re-consolidate the infrastructure for a united communist movement. ■

Democracy in Tonga only possible with a republic

Tonga's King Tupou VI has called for "integrity and reform" in the Tongan government. His calls come after an embattled period of political fights between the Royal family and previous PM Sovaleni over cabinet appointments. Sovaleni was previously Deputy PM to PM 'Akilisi Pohiva.

In the latest Address from the Throne (A royal speech to Parliament), Tupou VI stated, "It is the duty of the government to ensure every public fund is accounted for, managed according to the law, and documented effectively for the benefit of the nation."

Tupou VI's statements ring hollow, since the history of the modern Tongan kingdom is one of obfuscation, a lack of transparency, and direct attacks against accountability – by the royalists themselves. 'Akilisi Pohiva himself had been the target of such attacks throughout the 80s to the 2000s.

Democratic control in Tonga is far from the reality. Despite reforms in the 2010s, the King still holds executive power, and continues to wield it as a bludgeon against even the softest reforms. Such is what we saw when PM Sovaleni attempted to make cabinet appointments without Tupou VI's approval.

Democracy in Tonga is not possible while the Royalists hold power. The executive authority of the King secures not only the continued control of the Royalists, but also the political and economic power of the nobles. The Royalists are also strong supporters of not only American imperialism, but AU/NZ imperialism in the Pacific.

Only a democratic republic – a republic organised around a radical constitution with a representative popular assembly – can not only enshrine the essential reforms needed to transform Tonga, but also to defend them.

Temokalati rejects the sham calls for reform and transparency by King Tupou VI, and calls on international comrades to support the Tongan democracy movement and socialism in the Pacific. Democracy is only possible by abolishing the monarchy, and only a socialist party of workers and toilers can wage that campaign. ■

Temokalati

Protest outside Pakistan embassy: Release our comrades

Last week, leading members of the Awami Action Committee - Gilgit-Baltistan, including members of the Inqalabi Communist Party (Pakistan), were arrested in a blatantly political attack. Comrades of the RCP in Britain held an emergency protest outside the Pakistani High Commission in central London.

On 19 May, comrades of the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) travelled from as far away as Cambridge to join an emergency protest outside the Pakistani embassy, following the arrest of leading members of the Awaami Action Committee and the Inqalabi Communist Party in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Our comrades have been arrested for purely political reasons. Specifically, they had planned a meeting to be held later this month in Skardu, aimed at addressing the ownership of natural resources in the area.

Due to the success of our comrades in fighting for the poor and oppressed of Gilgit-Baltistan, alongside their steadfast opposition to the plundering of natural resources by imperialism and the Pakistani ruling class, they have been targeted.

In particular, the Pakistani state has detained Ehsan Ali, chairman of the Awaami Action Committee, who helped lead a mass movement that successfully lowered the cost of flour and helped gain important concessions on electricity, healthcare, and education. Protest at Pakistan High Commission London today for the release of leaders of Awami Action Committee Gilgit Baltistan.

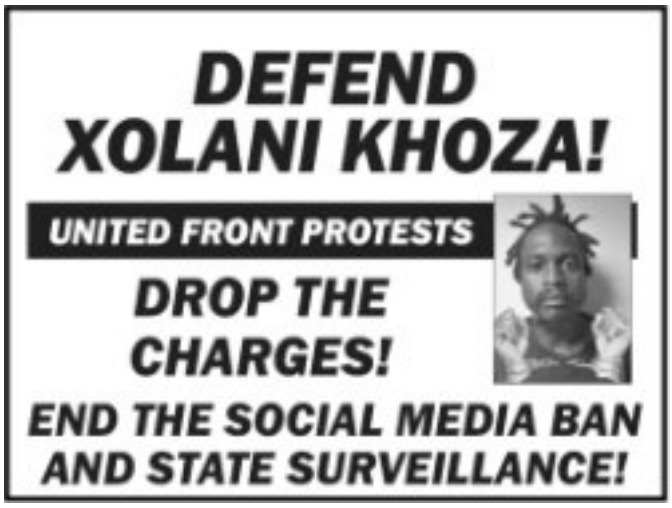
Since this success, Ali has constantly been harassed by state authorities and put on the Fourth Schedule, which has severely restricted freedom of movement. ■ ***Revolutionary Communist International (RCI)***

Defend Xolani Khoza!

Everyone in the cross-hairs of the neoliberal ANC-DA government has an urgent interest in mobilising to defend EFF militant Xolani Gregory Khoza. Khoza is facing charges of incitement to commit terrorism, public violence and intimidation. His "crime"? Posting a TikTok video calling for a shutdown to protest the so-called Government of National Unity. Xolani was targeted by the state after he played a leading role in a SACCAWU strike in Mbombela in May.

Trade unionists, land rights activists, civic organisations, radical nationalists, socialists: This is an attack on all of us. Xolani's persecution is a blatant assault on freedom of speech which threatens to brand any who would resist the attacks of the GNU as "terrorists". We must not let our political differences stand in the way of uniting to fight this! On 2 and 27 September, Spartacist/South Africa and EFF Ward 29, Enhlanzeni, brought out dozens for a united-front protest outside the Mbombela courthouse where Xolani appeared for trial. Now we must build on this to pull together far broader forces to defend him when he is due in court again on 9 December. Drop all charges now!

To see how this pro-imperialist government is going to crack down on dissent, just look at the killing of EFF councillor Moshe Mphahlele by cops and security guards repressing a service delivery protest on 4 August in Alex. Don't let them silence Xolani, or they will come for all of us next!



Xolani was charged under the apartheid-era Riotous Assemblies Act of 1965 and the Cybercrimes Act of 2020. While he was released on bail, the conditions include muzzling him with a social media ban. This shows that despite the bourgeois media hype, the white rulers know very well that neo-apartheid South Africa is a tinderbox and the guise of "national unity" is extremely fragile. End the social media ban and state surveillance!

What the ruling class really fears is that mass struggle, particularly by the black proletariat, can challenge the GNU's pro-imperialist agenda. That makes defending Xolani a necessary first step in organising the trade unions, black masses and all the oppressed to fight back! ■ ***AmaBolsheviki Amnyama No. 2, Spartacist League of South Africa***

Queer Liberalism & Politics of Injury

The Queer movement's devotion to liberal democratic rights-first politics is a ball-and-chain on queer liberation politics. ***Mila Volkova*** *explains how queer liberation is incompatible with queer liberalism, which is the "politics of injury".*

In the struggle for gay marriage in Australia, the queer movement scored an enormous victory against the right. Yet, even after such an enormous defeat of the conservative movement, the queer movement felt discouraged rather than elated. We hadn't won the complete 'recognition' and 'freedom' that we thought we would. Even though the struggle was openly anti-patriarchal and pro-queer, we had only made a little progress, if we had made any at all. Why?

In States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity, Wendy Brown launches a scathing critique of the liberal conception of 'freedom' and 'rights'. She argues that liberalism only offers an abstract form of freedom, that of equality under the law and universal human rights. We are promised that we'll get a 'fair go', and that we'll be treated equally no matter who we are. But this formal, abstract, universal, and equal freedom falls flat in the face of the objective conditions of exploitation.

Liberal democratic institutions don't stop the real de-valuing of women's testimony in sexual assault cases, or the violence against queer or indigenous Australians. Though capitalists and workers supposedly interact as equal beings under contract law, they are nonetheless really unequal – the former controls the means of production, while the latter does not, leaving them with no choice but to sell themselves to the capitalist for whatever they can get.

These aren't just divisions based on bigotry or ignorance, manifesting in systematic oppression; they are the weapons of structures of exploitation – someone gains from this. For the capitalists in particular, that humans meet one another as formal equals in the market of contractual relations is what allows the real dominance of money (a massive quantitative difference). Liberal democratic freedoms don't just obscure the real relations of exploitation; they enable them in the first instance.

Brown goes further, arguing that there is no ideal of freedom that can be applied universally, already existing but just waiting to be grasped. Freedom is a practical process; it emerges from the conditions of domination and the social positions of those being dominated. Importantly, this domination takes a myriad of forms. Humans are particular beings, determined more by the places we occupy in the relations of power than by our common species. There can be no universal outlook of freedom, only particular ones informed by our particular positioning.

In reality, liberalism's universalism is the enforcement of an outlook born of one particular position on all others – the bourgeoisie, inflected with maleness and whiteness. This has an oppressive effect that renders all other particulars non-human, non-existent, and un-understandable. The potential political consequences of material division and exploitation is cancelled out by abstract political representation, the particular is incorporated into the universal through law and parliament.

The Queer Activist Scene

Fight, or raise awareness? Lobby, or organise? Liberation or liberalism? These are questions posed, though implicitly, by the queer activist scene in contemporary Australia. This scene is dominated by big NGO / lobby group / party-political personalities who often emphasise that our eventual and total liberation "one day" and fighting for rights and concessions now can peacefully co-exist. Though they certainly dedicate most of their enormous energy towards legal, health, and welfare reforms rather than liberation, is this claim true? Is the polite high-society road to reform parallel to the raging road to queer power?

The rights demanded by the queer scene seem to destabilise the universalist assumptions of the status quo by introducing concessions for specific groups, but they really serve to uphold this assumption. Trans people, women, indigenous Australians, the poor and a variety of other categories are to be seen as 'special cases', which require certain additional protections to gain equal access to civil society. The acceptance of a particular "I" as outside or complementary to the assumed "we" of liberalism works to ensure that the difference is not seen as fundamental – it can be cancelled through concession and negated as a-political.

What such concessions really achieve is the freeing of the state itself from the potential political force of social difference. By recognising them, the state undermines the basis for a social movement built on that

Rally for marriage equality, 2017, Melbourne. Photo: Paris Buttfield-Addison

difference. In doing so, the state does not free us from the material conditions that created the difference in the first place. The inferior social position of queer Australians may be recognised by the state, and concessions may be provided, but this does not change the fundamental reality of exploitation.

This is the plastic cage. We can bend its flexible bars as much as we like, but we are still trapped.

Brown calls our current era of social movements obsessed with these sorts of concessions as 'the politics of injury'. The obsession with collective trauma, of 'healing', of 'having our voices heard' and with 'recognition', emerges from a deep upset that many have with being excluded from the white male bourgeois ideal. Since the 20th century's universalist ideals (the Fordist family wage, lifelong employment, the end of history, global modernisation, etc.) have all crumbled in the face of capitalism's continued existence and the commodification of communication via social media, new identity-discourses have cropped up.

Queer identities especially are often rooted in disciplinary procedures; we use terms doctors once use to demean our sexuality or our peculiarity. This is somewhat natural. However, these identities are increasingly oriented towards a liberal discourse of injury and of rights, inherited from the civil rights movements. Though 'identity politics', as it is often disparagingly referred to, can be quite oppositional in stance, it is always protesting an exclusion from the white male bourgeois ideal. While it does so, it cannot protest the ideal itself. We are protesting our exclusion from an ideal which is made up!

Rights claims such as these naturalise, neutralise, and euthanize (as Brown puts it) our particularity without attacking the problem at its source. Our emancipation is purely idealistic, assumed through recognition in the legal and political system. Though Brown is primarily critiquing the extremely legalistic tone of the American social movements, it applies just as well to the Australian context.

Truth, Morality, and Power

This is where Brown's criticism of 'truth' in social movements comes in, which can be applied quite accurately to the Australian queer activist scene. A social group can become so mistreated, the horizon of its emancipation so far away, that it becomes more interested in truth and morality than in power. Here, truth means the idea of a transcendental truth that applies to everyone in all contexts, usually invented by 'rationality'. Similarly, morality here is defined as a system of ethics that has been made up abstractly, without regard for material context and social position. We have become so defeated and hopeless that we no longer demand victory. Instead, we yearn above all else to be recognised for our plight. There is a kind of sick satisfaction of its own in this – we enact abstract revenge on the powerful that exploit us for their wickedness. Nonetheless, we let them remain seated on their thrones.

This 'ressentiment' (from Nietzsche) accepts the universality of the white male bourgeois ideal. Rather than asserting our own particular ideal against theirs, and beginning the struggle to violently assert it, we have simply inverted theirs. This is what happens when the left compared Dutton to Voldemort and makes fun of Donald Trump for his perceived stupidity / craziness. These is no conception that these men aren't products of individual evils, but of a class that legitimises its domination after the fact.

Even where racism, sexism, transphobia etc. are posed as 'systemic'; this is only the outcome of an original western enlightenment fall from Eden. The original sin of the white, male, western colonist is framed in ontological (reality) and epistemological (truth) terms, rather than material terms. It is then compared to the moral perfection of indigenous or women or queer Australian culture. This contests the universality of the white male bourgeois ideal only at the level of the abstract, it is left intact at the level of materiality and of power itself.

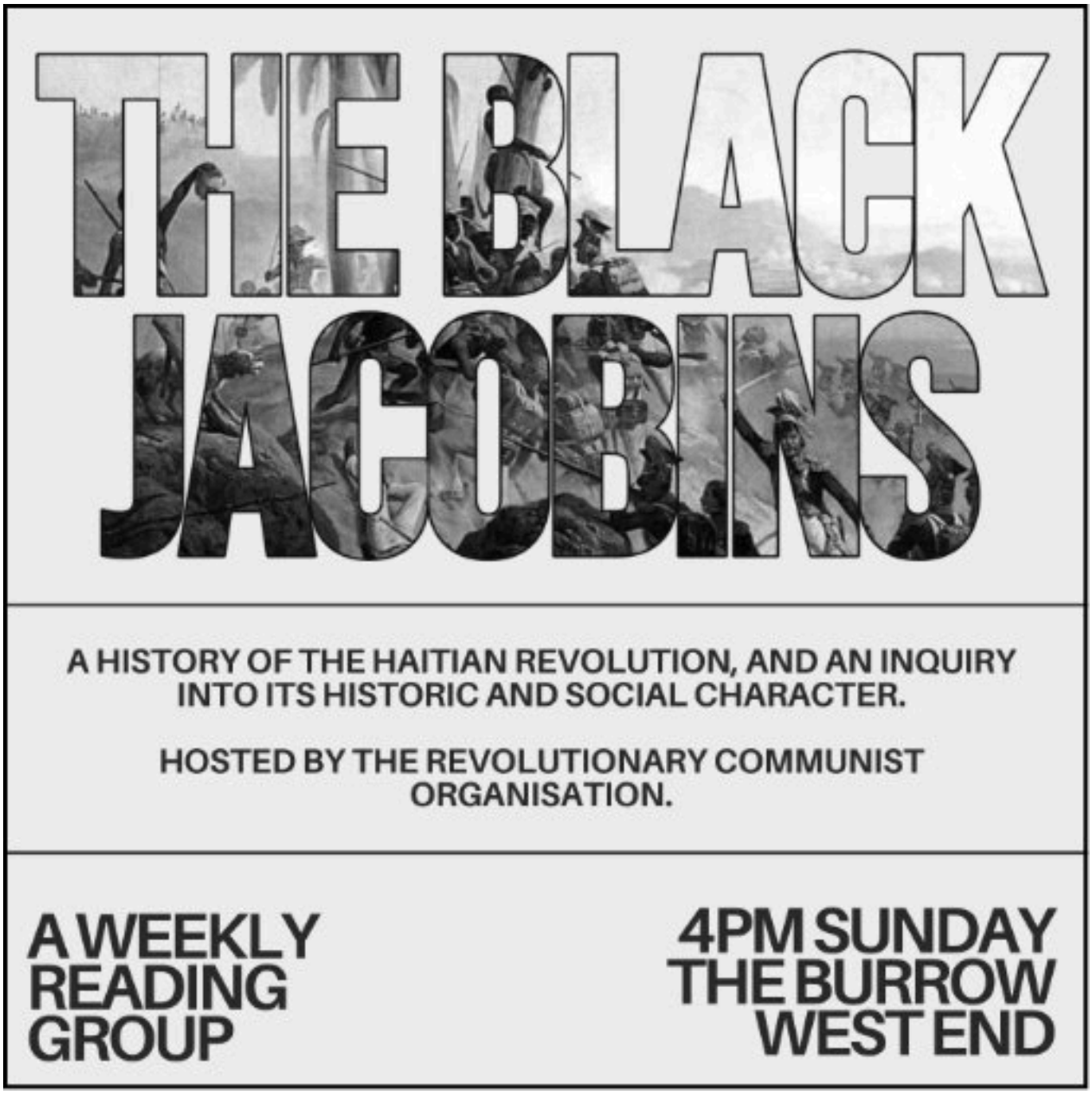
Though many with this outlook are involved in radical direct-action, and would resent the description I have offered here, they are

nonetheless engaged in a strategy that is just as reformist as the leaders of the queer activist scene. They are simply a more defeated and hopeless version of them. These acts do not contest power. They are simply more desperate attempts to reflexively strike out at one's exclusion, and to be recognised for it by the state.

Brown argues that ideas of truth and objective morality are corrosive for liberatory struggles. Such ideas find their power in the abstract, which is why they can satisfy themselves in the abstract. But power emerges from the material conditions of exploitation. Morality and truth thus hold back the quest for power. Our conditions can only be overcome through our own struggle for power that forcibly changes those material conditions.

Any struggle that bases itself in truth, for Brown, is also at risk of reproducing the conditions of its exploitation, even in the struggle for power. Her experience in the civil rights and workers movements in the 20th century highlighted to her how the notion of a universal female 'sisterhood' or of a working-class ideal excluded black women and migrant workers, which served to undermine the quest to destroy patriarchy and capital.

But there is another great risk in the politics of injury – fear of judgement. For Brown, it is critical for political movements to make judgements about what they want to achieve. But for movements obsessed with truth and morality, especially those claiming to fight white male bourgeois universalism, political judgement just replicates their traumatic exclusion. To them, judgement does not recognise the truth of exclusion. Power is evil


THE BLACK JACOBINS
A HISTORY OF THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION, AND AN INQUIRY INTO ITS HISTORIC AND SOCIAL CHARACTER.
HOSTED BY THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST ORGANISATION.
A WEEKLY READING GROUP
4PM SUNDAY THE BURROW WEST END

and we, the powerless, are good for it. The political of injury are thus insulated from necessary judgement. We will be inclusive and polite even as everything we love burns.

Transformation and Communism

But like many academics, Wendy Brown has a fetish for chaos. Apparently, the 21st century has disorganised life so thoroughly that there can be no sense of common reality anymore. For example, she argues that the bourgeoisie and the proletariat no longer really exist, which is ridiculous. The working class has always been fragmented by race and sex. Though Brown is totally right to point out that unity must never be assumed, and that de-industrialisation has dramatically altered class composition, the proletariat is already, always, half-united in its common exploitation by capitalism.

The queer activist scene, the radical liberals, the greens staffers, the NGOs, the lobby groups, the direct-action-ists, the socialist movement; all rely, in one way or another, on the assumptions of objective truth and morality. These hold us back. On them, Brown is right – there is no objective truth or universal morality, there is only the struggle for power between the exploiting and exploited classes.

We must take the side of the working class, and only the working class (in all its stripes), without apology. There is no universal vision of freedom, there is only our vision. We need no further justification to pursue it than that it is ours, and that achieving it will free us from the social murder, rape, and exhaustion the capitalist system inflicts on us. We can, we must, and we will create a world without hunger – where our children will live free to love, to create, and to rest without restraint.

As said, this vision does not exist out in the abstract waiting to be grasped: it must be created, and it emerges from our material conditions. We must make our own meaning, not find it. This is the role of the hypothetical communist party that the Revolutionary Communist Organisation wants to create. The half unity of the working class, existing in the conditions of our exploitation, must be transformed into concrete unity by revolutionary political education and struggle for reform.

Of course, such unity is impossible while the socialist movement itself remains divided. But, furthermore, it remains difficult while the working class itself is divided by internal stratification between citizens and migrants, men and women, queer and straight, indigenous and white. We must use the organs

A protest at Newcastle Library in support of drag queen storytime. Photo: Marina Neil

of struggle that already exist to collapse these divisions even while under capitalism's rule.

This is where we differ from the leaders of the queer activist scene in our attitude towards concessions and their role in the revolution. Unlike them, we do not see concessions as a good unto themselves, with no negative side-effects on the revolutionary struggle. On the contrary, we recognise the role they play in upholding the white male bourgeois ideal and obscuring the material source of our exploitation. This is why we must oppose all attempts at legal 'inclusion', such as gay marriage or gender marker reform; but make immediate demands for the wholesale abolition of these institutions.

Reforms should only be won where they fight to bring the material situation of different groups in the working class closer together and thus accelerate the development of political consciousness. This is why the fight for immediate reforms must always be framed in terms of the revolutionary struggle. The wariness of many socialists to use openly revolutionary rhetoric for fear of alienating workers is, in this way, self-defeating.

The roads to revolution and reform are not parallel, and queer liberation and queer liberalism are not complementary strategies. The revolutionary highway may have many bus stops of concession along the way, but the leaders of the queer activist scene are on a never-ending roundabout to nowhere. It's time for queer Australians to get on the damn bus. ■

Communists & Queer liberation in Australia

*Communists have a frosty relationship with queer social movements in Australia, rubbing up against the liberalism of NGOs and not-for-profits. But some of this frostiness, **Luca Fraillon** writes, comes down to communists not understanding what queer oppression is materially.*

Radical lesbians at a demonstration in Sydney, 1979. Photo: Tribune CPA

Queer liberation is a prescient issue for communist organisations in Australia. Most, bar a few reactionary groupings, support the struggle of queer workers. However, very few are able to articulate why. Many will assert that homophobia and transphobia, along with a whole list of chauvinisms, are simply attempts by the capitalist class to divide the proletariat. This, of course, implies some grand conspiracy, by which 'global elites' sit around a long table, cackling as they decide which minority to next scapegoat in order to prevent socialist revolution.

It is no wonder many queer organisations disavow themselves of Marxism and socialism. This is inevitable when the socialist left is claiming that their struggle is a ploy of the ruling class, and that they must 'overcome division' in order to reach a class consciousness that remains curiously straight, white, and male. Even more condescendingly, they are told that their discrimination will immediately cease in a socialist society, the battle for queer acceptance won as a byproduct of working-class revolution.

How, why? Do such organisations think that any vestiges of reactionary moral conservatism disappear as soon as the means of production are seized? Or perhaps it is once the commodity form is abolished that so too are gender norms, or further still that within the revolutionary fervour every worker forgets their prejudices, links in arms with their queer siblings, and they all sing kumbaya. These misconceptions come from a fundamental confusion of the position of queer workers in Australia today, and only by analysing and fully understanding this position can we effectively and correctly link queer liberation with the communist cause.

Queer workers in Australia suffer on two fronts – they are both discriminated against, and oppressed. These two words are often used interchangeably, and it would be understandable to consider them as synonyms. However, this conflation is a fundamental mistake made in most analyses of queer struggle. Discrimination of queer Australians is rampant. They are twice as likely to face it in the workplace, and nearly 1 in 2 choose to hide their identity in social settings. 25% of Australian workers said that they could never see themselves as an ally of the queer community.

These are all forms of interpersonal discrimination that plague queer workers, and the result is a dramatic increase in mental health issues, insecurity, and fear within the community. The tendency of many socialists at this point is to react that "capitalism is to blame!". This is a disingenuous and untrue response. The church, which has been around for significantly longer than capitalism as an economic system, plays a large role, as do a variety of cultural and social norms that exist somewhat independently of the capitalist mode of production. Discrimination, chauvinism, and prejudice will not be vanquished with capitalism, and most queer people know this.

So what, then, is oppression? Oppression, as opposed to discrimination, is systemic. It cannot exist as simply a relationship between two people, but rather exists as a function of society. Fundamental to capitalism is the nuclear family. Engels traced its relation to private property in The Origin of the Family, Private Property & the State, and though his anthropological research is well outdated, what remains cogent is that the family reproduces labour. Where the worker produces capital, the family produces and maintains the worker. As a result, capitalism requires the nuclear family to reproduce its own conditions of existence, and people that exist outside of that model will be at a systemic, not only interpersonal,

Israeli Embassy Assassinations

On Thursday night [May 22nd], Elias Rodriguez shot two Israeli Embassy staffers outside an American Jewish Committee gala for Zionist diplomats. Though quickly painted as an act of random antisemitic violence by the US media and politicians, Rodriguez's manifesto released by journalist Ken Klippenstein shows a clear desire to target figures not for their faith but for their connection to a state carrying out genocide. The feverish outcry provoked by the shooting—which will likely deepen the crackdown on pro-Palestinian and leftist speech across the West—was naturally absent when Israeli forces shot at 25 touring diplomats in the West Bank the day before.

Assassinations and other acts of individual spectacle undermine the proletariat's ability to resist genocide and other attacks, provoking repression without building the forces to withstand it. The rise of such attacks, however, reveals a deepening rift between the urgent needs of the oppressed and the absence or inaction of working-class leadership. Liberal and social-democratic critics have been quick to denounce individual violence and call for "mass action." But so long as mass action is contained to endless rallies for yet more ceasefires, which will only be immediately broken, the consequences of terrorism must ultimately be laid at the feet of these reformist leaders. Real resistance to genocide demands strikes, port blockades and other serious disruptions of the West's supply of weapons to Israel—actions only the workers' movement can deliver.

Leon Trotsky wrote in 1911: "The outbreaks of anarchist assassination in Western Europe and North America always come after some atrocity committed by the government—the shooting of strikers or executions of political opponents. The most important psychological source of terrorism is always the feeling of revenge in search of an outlet... Whatever the eunuchs and pharisees of morality may say, the feeling of revenge has its rights. It does the working class the greatest moral credit that it does not look with vacant indifference upon what is going on in this best of all possible worlds. Not to extinguish the proletariat's unfulfilled feeling of revenge, but on the contrary to stir it up again and again, to deepen it, and to direct it against the real causes of all injustice and human baseness—that is the task of [Marxism]." ■ **International Bolshevik Tendency**

disadvantage. Queer workers find themselves excluded from the nuclear family, and thus face oppression under the capitalist mode of production.

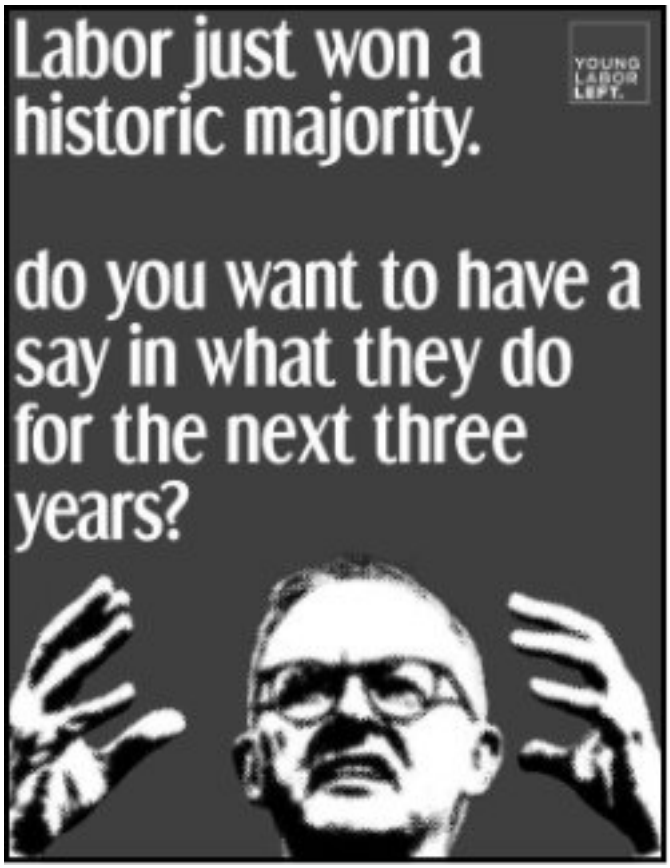
Discrimination and oppression are obviously linked. For the nuclear family to be an effective social norm, it must rely on the creation and demonisation of an 'other' that exists in opposition to what it stands for – that is, queer people. This is why much of the conservative discourse around queer liberation centres on debates around children, innocence, and purity. These are the core cultural tenets associated with the family unit. An attack on the nuclear family is seen as being an attack on everything it represents, and thus the existence of queer people is a direct threat. However, while chauvinism may have systemic roots, it is not a feature of any one economic system. The abolition of capitalism is a necessary condition to eliminate the oppression of queer workers, but it is not sufficient in eliminating discrimination against them.

What way forward is there for communists to intervene in queer struggle? There must be an intervention, for otherwise queer rights movements will simply be absorbed into liberal progressivism, addressing some aspects of discrimination but never fundamentally challenging structures of oppression. It is this link between the systemic subjugation of queer people and the dominant system of production that must be made clear by communists; we must abandon the idealist line that anti-queer sentiment is simply a tool to divide the working class, and undertake a genuine materialist analysis of both discrimination and oppression for queer workers today.

To do otherwise would be to reject dialectical materialism in favour of vulgar class analysis, and it is a tactic that will ultimately lead to the loss of queer workers to the communist cause. We must acknowledge that discrimination must be fought under any system of production, but carefully elucidate the ways that oppression can only be fought through the system of production. We must unite under the banner of queer liberation, and fight genuinely for such liberation until our dying breath. ■

Labor won. What next?

Labor knocked the 2025 federal election out of the park. But, contrary to the true believers, Labor doesn't have some world-historic mandate to enact some groundbreaking, progressive agenda. Instead, ***Porco*** *writes, Labor is all smoke and mirrors, and communists need to make serious moves to build a party of their own.*



This election turned a new page for Australian politics. At first glance, the electorate voted for stability, and the perceived steady leadership of Anthony Albanese. In a world of increasing disorder and global conflict, Albanese successfully marketed himself as the reliable and good humoured manager of Australian capitalism. He may be a tepid neoliberal social democrat (emphasis on the neoliberal part), but he's our tepid neoliberal social democrat.

The Coalition lost ten seats in this election. They had lost another five over the last three years. They're haemorrhaging support from their voter base. It was the lowest Coalition primary vote since the Liberal party's formation. Voters have been shifting more and more to independents and smaller rightwing parties, such as One Nation and the Libertarians. In 2025, the minor parties and independent primary vote was 33.1%. For the Coalition it was 31.8%.

Labor inconceivably expanded its lower house majority to ninety-three seats with a mere 34% of the primary vote. This victory rationalised a divided electorate with a message of "patriotic progressivism". Labor did not mention labour once in the victory speeches or election coverage. Instead, Penny Wong talked about how the "Liberal party does not represent middle Australia", and how the "Australian story is embodied by our Prime Minister".

Peter Dutton lost his own seat and Trump claimed he had no idea who he was. Trump likes to posture that he only ever chooses "winners". If everyone is just in it for themselves, there's nothing more reprehensible than a hairless copycat.

Labor's "mandate"

Albanese has ushered in a new Labor regime. He could win the election after this. Seats that the Liberals had held since their formation flipped to Labor in double digit swings.

Labor's "mandate" is a rebuttal from the Liberal base of Dutton's culture war theory of change. Labor is beginning to turn the inner city Liberal electorates. The Liberal Party experienced huge swings against them in the rich inner suburbs of every major city, and in many regional city electorates as well. The outer suburbs where Labor reigns had been Dutton's focus. But Labor held on, even if their primary vote did diminish.

Dutton lost his seat to Labor candidate Ali France with a 7.7% swing. The Liberals also had massive swings against them from Chinese voters. The Liberal election campaign consisted of "DOGE" (Elon Musk's "Department of Government Efficiency", named for a dog meme from the 2010s) cuts, incoherent and non-costed nuclear plans, and an obsession with standing out the front of petrol stations. The Liberals were forced to consider the possibility that they don't understand the Australian electorate anymore.

While Labor appears ascendant, this election was really decided by preferences. The Australian electorate is actually more fragmented than ever in recent memory. Labor attained an almost 20% bump from third party preference votes. Labor will try to obfuscate this fact, but it's hard to imagine this level of internal conflict in Australian society going away just because Labor have over ninety-three

seats in the lower house.

For context, the Coalition would have won an extra thirteen seats if we had a "first past the post" (FPTP) system like the United Kingdom. Bill Shorten lost the 2019 election with a higher primary vote than Albanese. Preference voting can lead to some strange outcomes. The Greens achieved almost 1.9M primary votes in the lower house and lost almost all of their seats.

Labor is going to act like they have total social support. Albanese claims that he appreciates the Liberal voters that switched to his party, but it remains to be seen what Labor's plans for governing are other than 5% deposits for first-time home buyers will be. They can act like the last two elections haven't been a cry for change for now. However, change is coming whether they like it or not.

Labor may have achieved a historic victory, but their mandate is simply to remain calm, shelter us from the rest of the world, and espouse a very particular kind of "civic nationalism" that serves as the political equivalent of carbon monoxide filling our lungs. When you look closer at the minor parties who receive 1-10% of the vote in any given electorate, you will see a stratified and contradictory Australian society increasingly at its own neck.

Green around the gills

The Greens have scratched at the two major parties for the past decade. Both parties have conveniently used the Greens as the irritating sideshow — they are blamed for everything, and never to be trusted. The Greens played into and benefitted from this dynamic, becoming in the last election cycle an almost social-democratic party in rhetoric. But this strategy led their nervous base to choose Labor after all. Albanese was considered fundamentally less dangerous to the environment than Dutton. This has meant that Labor has cut the Greens down to one lower house seat in Queensland (Ryan). They also lost a seat in the senate.

Adam Bandt said on election night that "millions of people across the country have voted for the Greens, more than ever before in history." He declared his own victory prematurely, being forced to concede his seat to Labor after dragging his feet for a few days. The Greens did receive a higher primary vote than 2022, but not by much. Less than a percentage point.

Bandt wanted to have his cake and eat it too. Why did they lose three of their seats in parliament? What does this say about our electoral system? Greens voters should be angry, and they should be demanding electoral reform. If we really desire climate action, we're going to need bolder politicians than protest candidates who breathe a sigh of relief when they lose their seat (as Max Chandler-Mather did after conceding his loss in Griffith).

The Greens appear to be losing their political relevance, being stuck roughly in the 10%-15% vote share range for the last decade. Climate action cannot be legislated by this parliamentary system. The radical flank of the Greens should come to terms with this sooner, rather than later. If they want to meaningfully stop coal production going forward, they're going to have to recognise that this state, our economy, our entire social formation is reliant on this mining boom. We can only change this with a mass movement of workers, a social revolution and the expropriation of the commanding heights of the economy.

Unfortunately these are commitments the right-wing of the Greens will never touch. The left-wing of the Greens, if serious about climate action, should break from these tree-tories.

Coalition "on hold"

The Nationals couldn't take it any longer, they had to dump the Liberals after Sussan Ley's nomination for leader. While it's doubtful this split will stick around until the next election (or until next week), the move made the Coalition look even weaker politically. John Howard called the split a "stupid move," and exclaimed "disunity is death" (The Right understands this, why don't Socialists?). Nationals leader David Littleproud listed nuclear power and supermarket divestiture as some of the fundamental policy positions that he wanted the Liberals to guarantee.

The Coalition faces a demographic problem. The Australian electorate is simply becoming more divided and more metropolitan. The LNP's voters are all aging, and the cities are ballooning to politically dominate parliament. Now, this split creates even more problems for the Liberals and the Nationals, because the Liberal Party is going to have to reform its political positions if it ever hopes to win back these inner city electorates. But some of these changes may be fundamentally at odds with the demands of the Nationals. Who the Liberals also require to win government.

All of this is also going to take place in the context of an increasingly unstable climate. Australia is the one of the front lines of the ecological catastrophe. When 84% of Australians claim they have been personally affected by a climate disaster, the Coalition's climate denialism has become increasingly toxic politically. This is a material reality that

will not go away. The Coalition could conceivably disintegrate under the weight of it's own ideological commitments to the mass polluting industries.

This just means Labor may become the dominant political force in the country for the foreseeable future. What this means for socialists right now is uncertain. We cannot meaningfully influence the Labor party, nor should we spend anymore time doing entryism into the Greens. The left-wing of the Greens should be uniting with socialists. But we don't have a robust political organisation that can appeal to them yet. Our own political immaturity as a socialist movement is the first barrier we must address.

Is there a Socialist Alternative?

Victorian Socialists (VS) gained almost twenty four thousand votes this election, and felt that this warranted a national expansion. State franchises have sprouted up in the last few weeks, showing a readiness to mobilise that might not have been imaginable before hand.

This is a positive development for the socialist movement. However, it falls short of a truly unified socialist party project. VS is a Socialist Alternative front with a non aligned section of organisers. SAlt know this better than anyone. The other branches of The Socialists will still be beholden, for the time being, to the executive committee in Victoria. There does not seem to be a national strategy per se, nor does VS have a revolutionary program. It is sub reformist platform, a mere phantasmagoria of socialist politics.

This expansion provides the RCO with an opportunity to petition for a truly democratic party, that is revolutionary and united around a socialist program.

Our manifesto is Partyism. We believe in democracy, and in factions. We believe in actual politics. We reject Marx-ish cargo cults and petty sectarian conflicts. If Socialist Alliance will not join the Socialist Party, then they must be vigorously critiqued. If Socialist Alternative continue to exploit this Socialist Party for their own organisation's purposes, they should be admonished. The failures of the past must be metabolised by the movement of the future in the present. There is no longer any good reason to remain divided. Our division and our sectarianism is the primary obstruction to developing a mass socialist workers movement.

History will not remember the socialists who dragged their feet. The future is for the working class. Not our obscure cliques. We can only petition for that future politically with a program and political coherence. ■

CPI(ML) strongly condemns the cold-blooded extra-judicial killing of the General Secretary of CPI(Maoist) Comrade Keshav Rao and other Maoist activists and Adivasis in Narayanpur-Bijapur.

From the celebratory post of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, it is clear that the state is spearheading Operation Kagar as an extra-judicial extermination campaign and taking credit for killing citizens and suppressing Adivasi protests against corporate plunder and militarisation in the name of combating Maoism.

We appeal to all justice-loving Indians to insist on a judicial probe into the massacre and demand an immediate end to the military operation, especially when the Maoists have declared a unilateral ceasefire.

-- Central Committee, Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation (May 21, 2025, New Delhi) ■ **Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation**

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Partisan produces quality & independent communist journalism, reporting on the Left in Australia as well as the workers and social movements. We provide a crucial, critical eye to the Left while providing our positive perspective.

Queer liberation strategy in the 21st century

Communists need to present queer workers with an emancipatory, revolutionary program. ***Alice*** *sketches out an idea of what that could look like in our current situation.*

In an era of global capitalism characterised by a crisis of reproduction, sustained systematic violence, and the rolling back of social and political rights, the contemporary struggle for queer liberation is dangerously weak, disparate, and confused.

Queer workers are presented with "solutions" which amount to liberal bourgeois reformism, moralism and assimilationist politics, reifying the very social and material conditions which underpin the exploitative regime of global capital.

Communists must demonstrate the complete futility of this "queer rights" campaign in addressing the oppressive and exploitative social relations of our time, and must develop and present a political alternative in the form of a revolutionary program.

This means we must openly and ruthlessly critique the false promises and insidious hegemony of reactionary ideology and repressive state apparatuses which maintain the subjugation of queer proletarians, placing us at greater risk of poverty, discrimination, homelessness, incarceration, suicide, and domestic, interpersonal, and family violence. This critique, however, cannot solely be a negative criticism of reactionary and bourgeois elements ("The legalisation of gay marriage does not provide equality for queer workers"), we must accompany negative analysis with positive demands ("Bourgeois formal legal 'equality' in marriage must be superseded by the complete abolition of marriage as an institution.").

As queer workers, we are endlessly confronted with an immense grief, fear and hopelessness in our personal lives, in those of our queer comrades, in the suffocatingly hegemonic mass-media, and in the dead-end proliferation of laws, policies, and regulations. None of this furthers our liberation, and in fact, often only provides the state apparatuses with further mechanisms of violence, repression, control and surveillance.

We must break from a cycle of reformist assimilation and ideological subsumption by fighting for queer liberation, as well as the

Photo: Trans Justice Project transjustice.org.au

interconnected struggles of all components of the working class subject to exploitative relations of social domination, under the banner of communism.

Involvement and agitation in the contemporary queer liberation movement should seek to address the immediate aims and concerns of queer workers through a patient yet fervent strategy which ultimately advances the fight for the formation of a mass communist party . Such a strategy is conceptualised as a minimum-maximum program.

The scope of the minimum demands desirable for such a program are broad and complex, and an article of this size would be unable to meaningfully address each aspect.

However, I would like to outline two key points of strategic orientation below, including a range of minimum demands pertaining to each.

For the unity of the queer and women's liberation movements

We must recognise and agitate around the fact that there can be no queer liberation without the liberation of women. Gendered relations, and thereby gender, functions as a mechanism for the social division of labour, and crucially, this ensures the necessary social reproduction for the formation and maintenance of the ideal worker under capitalism. In particular, the family unit is key to the patriarchal exploitation and social relations of domination over women and queer people. Unpaid and systematically

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Socialists

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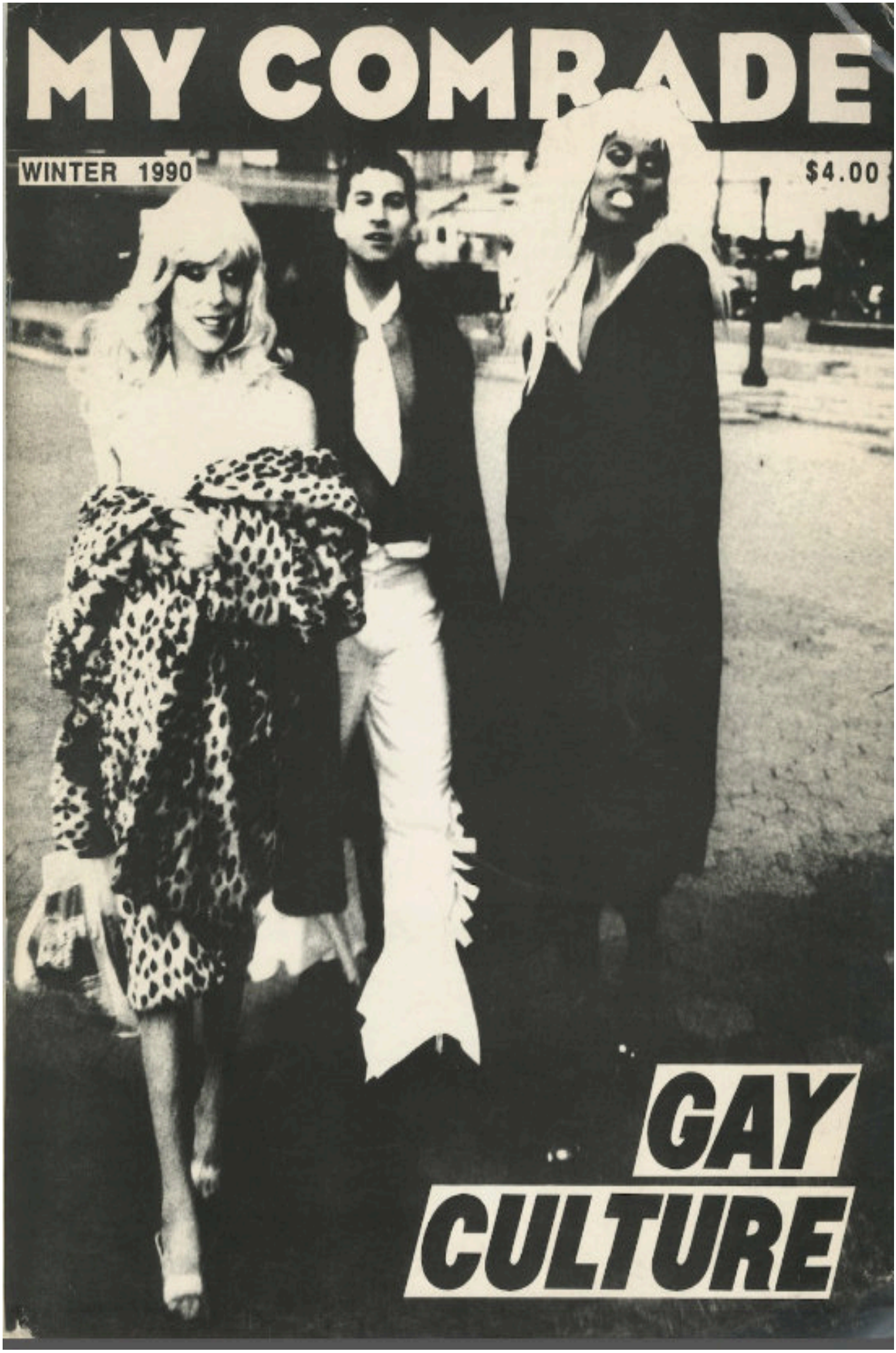
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undervalued domestic labour, domestic, sexual, and family violence, and social alienation and isolation are just a few of the many social phenomena sustained by the atomised organisation of a society dependent on the family form for its social reproduction.

Communists must fight for the total abolition of the family unit and agitate for political alternatives which address the issues of our current epoch. Free childcare and parental leave, and the collectivisation and socialisation of all forms of domestic labour including child-rearing, as well as abolition of private property, seizure of all housing and redistribution on the basis of need by the working class are all measures which seek to further the struggle for liberation on a social and material basis. We must not shy away from the necessary militancy in these aims. Militant activities will of course be paramount to the seizure and redistribution of housing in addition to their role in the self-emancipation of those subject to patriarchal and discriminatory forms of social domination. Of particular importance is the formation of women's and queer defence militias tasked with organising around the prevention and elimination of sexual and domestic violence.

Communists must also organise around issues of access to healthcare and social and community services. Of note is raising minimum demands for access to free gender-affirming care and reproductive healthcare under the informed consent model. Women and queer people, including transgender children, must be supported to break from the ideological and legal repression of the bourgeois state and family unit.

This includes calling for free abortions, contraception, crisis and psychological support services, access to gyms and sporting facilities, as well as Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) accompanied by revolutionary education developed by women and queer workers for the advancement of our own informed self-emancipation. For the abolition of gender and the family form! Down with reactionary feminism and reformism!

For an international and anti-imperialist struggle

Globalisation and de-industrialisation, as well as successes of aspects of the queer rights movement in the imperial core, has contributed to a crisis in the reproduction of gendered-relations and the destabilisation of the family unit.

For example, the formal legal recognition of monogamous homosexual marriage across imperial core nations presses up against the normative division of social and "productive" labour, as predicated on, and reinforcing of, the bourgeois family unit. Additionally, domestic and social labour necessary for the reproduction of this increasingly destabilised family form is outsourced to socially and economically marginalised proletarians of the imperial periphery. The proclaimed pluralism of the contemporary liberal state is in contradiction with the gendered relations and family form which reproduce the ideal worker.

In an attempt by the liberal nation-state at a violent reassertion of purported "family values", social chauvinism drives the undercurrent for a wave of fascistic reaction, as domestic and social labour in the imperial core is outsourced to socially and economically marginalised proletarians of the imperial periphery. An anti-imperialist, international struggle is necessary for queer liberation precisely because queer liberation is only possible through emancipation from a global system of capital. A global struggle is required to overthrow a global system. Thus, the necessity of an internationalist, anti-imperialist struggle does not emerge from the character of the queer identity in and of itself directly. Rather, it emerges from the character of gender and the heterosexual unit as dependent upon the particular division of labour and mode of production that define them.

To overcome the exploitation of gender and patriarchy (and thus, to achieve queer liberation), we must overcome an international system of (re)production. Amongst many other demands, the scope of which are beyond this article, we must do away with the bourgeois, moralistic notions of human rights. International law enshrines the social relations that keep women and queer workers subsumed into the global system of capital, and work to maintain the hegemony of imperial core nations. The institution of marriage, and sex and gender as legally defined categories are reified by supra-national bodies to justify the continued super-exploitation of workers in the imperial periphery under the guise of social chauvinism.

Human rights are also used to advance the political and economic interests of governments and corporations on the international stage. Emboldened by the bourgeois legal entrenching of parochial liberal ideology and imperial capital interests (the two inextricably linked), nations in the imperial core maintain hegemony through war, violence

and super-exploitation in the imperial periphery. The unity of the queer liberation and anti-imperialist movements is central to the emancipation of the global proletariat under a global system of capitalism.

Communists, therefore, must take on an explicitly revolutionary strategy which engages with the contemporary socialist, workers', women's, and disparate queer movements by engaging in open and ruthless critique which is both positive and negative in nature. This critique must be centred and organised around a minimum-maximum program which moves towards the baseline conditions required for the fundamental transformation of all aspects of life, and which sees the self-emancipation of queer workers, as members of the global working class, unified under the banner of the communism. ■

Electoral front goes national

Victorian Socialists are establishing franchises across the country. ***Marcus Strom*** *looks at the background, the manoeuvring, the programmatic poverty - but welcomes the formation of the Communist Platform. Originally published in* ***Weekly Worker #1539****.*

In the aftermath of the Australian federal election, and buoyed by its *very* limited success, the Victorian Socialists have announced they will become a national party with franchises in all Australian states and territories.

The proposal is for Victorian Socialists to rename itself the Socialist Party and be known throughout Australia's colonial-era states as 'The Socialists'. So, in New South Wales, the most populous state, there will be 'NSW Socialists', Queensland will have its own 'QLD Socialists' and so on across the six states and two territories. Victorian parochialism will go national, with the 'party' word largely hidden from the branding.

The VS has a chequered history. Starting in 2018, the formation initially united the state's two largest socialist organisations, Socialist Alternative and Socialist Alliance, responding to an initiative of Stephen Jolly from the Militant/Committee for a Workers International tradition. Jolly has been a local councillor in Melbourne since 2004 and is now independent mayor of Yarra Valley. After being its star candidate in 2018, Jolly resigned from VS a year later amid "unspecified and serious allegations". Socialist Alliance, the smaller grouping, withdrew in 2020, when it lost the right to maintain a veto on the VS executive.

Sect project

The Victorian Socialists is now dominated by the (post?) Cliffite Socialist Alternative, which sees the project as its 'electoral front' - no doubt to siphon disillusioned Australian Labor Party and Green voters towards its sect project, which it sees as the embryo of the 'Real Revolutionary Party'. Like most Trotskyist organisations, it thinks the 'revolutionary' programme is only relevant during 'the revolution'. It has no concept of a minimum programme acting as a strategic roadmap to organise today's struggles to the point the working class wins power. So, in order to do 'mass work' during a non-revolutionary period, it peddles warmed-over left reformism to create a pond to fish in. Economic and liberal demands to the fore; democracy and the nature of how society is ruled sidelined.

After winning more than 5% of the vote from three electorates, Socialist Alternative thinks it has the wind at its tail and could hit the big time. A week after announcing the national push on social media, VS says it has signed up 1,700 people, with the national membership now at 3,000.

At its conference in June, it will change its name to 'The Socialist Party' and expand its executive from 13 co-opting secretaries of each state and territory franchise, all of which have been appointed, not elected, by the Socialist Alternative-controlled Victorian executive - a guaranteed and reinforced majority. In response, the rival Socialist Alliance group, which had a non-aggression pact with VS in the 2025 election (unlike 2022 where they ran against each other), put out a defensive and vaguely threatening statement that said the Socialist Party "has not been initiated by Socialist Alliance, nor is it a united socialist project". [See: *Statement by Socialist Alliance*, socialist-alliance.org]

The Alliance statement said that the two groups met on May 8 at the initiative of Socialist Alternative (underlining that VS is still a wholly owned SA vehicle), which will put the expansion proposal to the VS conference in June but with "no immediate desire to seek greater unity for a national electoral project". In other words, they are merely seeking an arrangement where both avoid standing against each other. At the senate level that

Eleanor Morley of Socialist Alternative speaks at the May 25th meet & greet of the NSW Socialists. Photo: Victorian Socialists FB

could prove tricky. However, realising there could be a clash of registering names, Socialist Alternative asked Socialist Alliance not to block its national party registration in other states with the Australian Electoral Commission. Socialist Alliance stated it would not do this: "as the longest-standing federally registered party with 'socialist' in the name, Socialist Alliance has first rights to its use". A clear threat, but what is unclear is what it wants in response.

The current rules of the Victorian Socialists, while permitting open and public 'groupings' (i.e., factions), would bar Socialist Alliance members joining the Socialist Party.

Reminiscent of anti-communist clauses in the ALP and the British Labour Party, VS rules state: "Members of other (registered political parties), or aligned groupings or organisations attempting to (register) ... are not permitted to join or continue membership of the party."

This puts the Socialist Alliance in a bind. If it stands aside from the Socialist Party project, it risks being completely eclipsed. Its membership is older and smaller than Socialist Alternative, which ran a very strong ground operation in the last election.

No doubt the Socialist Alternative old guard of Mick Armstrong, Sandra Bloodworth and Diane Fieldes sees an opportunity to put their old DSP rivals to the sword. And, given the *fait accompli* presented to it by Socialist Alternative, the Socialist Alliance would need to renounce its separate electoral registration to join the Socialist Party.

Of course, it should just join. One of the main reasons people do not vote for socialists is they present as a collection of infighting, rag-tag sects. Speaking as a Marxist in the Australian Labor Party, I believe it would make fighting for socialist politics in the ALP that much easier if Marxists outside got their act together.

Seizing on the opportunity to push the organisation beyond being an electoral front of the Socialist Alternative group, the fledgling Revolutionary Communist Organisation has just voted to instruct its members and supporters to join the new Socialist Party as a site to fight for democratic unity around a Marxist programme.

Recognising the potential pitfalls, the decision of the RCO's central committee notes the launch of the Socialist Party project is a "cynical attempt by the Socialist Alternative group to expand the reach of their electoral front. This new organisation will be wholly and undemocratically dominated by Socialist Alternative and will primarily serve as a front for them to recruit to their sectarian organisation." But the living reality of such a project could create opportunities for the RCO to develop its own political culture and experience.

Resolution

The RCO resolution states:

"We should not understate the importance of this opportunity to the development of the partyist tendency in Australia. The creation of the Socialist Party will deepen the liquidationist trend within the mainline of Australian Cliffism and open up a space for political struggle around socialist ideas. It would be sectarian posturing to stay out of such a struggle."

Last weekend, the RCO launched a Communist Caucus of the Victorian Socialists, that will expand nationally with the Socialist Party. It will not be limited to RCO members, but open to any in the Socialists who accepts its platform for revolutionary republican-democracy and partyism.

The RCO resolution further states:

"*Without the active intervention of an organised and disciplined partyist faction, the Socialist Party will inevitably degenerate into another 'broad left' project which tails Laborism and furthers the weakness and division of the socialist movement. However, with such a faction, the formation of the Socialist Party can be the beginning of an open struggle for a genuinely democratic mass socialist party with a firm base in the workers' movement.*"

This points to the fact that Socialist Alternative and some of its independent allies in VS believe they can present left reformist nostrums merely to build an electoral presence. This is another attempted shortcut to the big

time - and we have all seen that movie before. Nonetheless, life can be shaped. It makes sense for all Marxists not in the ALP to join the Socialist Party and take it from being an electoral front of one small sect to an organisation that has the potential to be much more.

The Solidarity group (the official Cliffite franchisee), the Communist Party of Australia, the Australian Communist Party, the New Communist Party, the Communist Party (ML), Socialist Alliance, Red Ant/Red Spark, Freedom Socialist Party, etc - all should leave their sect pasts behind them and try to unite: not as reformists, but Marxists. The current VS electoral platform, however, is more for 'wealth redistribution' and 'social justice' than socialism. While it talks about a different and new society, and calls for capitalism to be abolished, there is no strategic roadmap to achieve this goal.

And it certainly does not take this demand into its election material. While the VS aims refer to socialism (along with confused descriptions), they also state: "Victorian Socialist candidates, if elected, will fight for a radical redistribution of wealth and power." A clear left reformist formulation. While it says there will be a 'socialist republic', there are no demands to abolish the monarchy, the Senate or the colonial era states and territories. Nothing on the nature of the judiciary or even calls for proportional representation. While it does call for the abolition of the security services (ASIO), it says the money saved should be diverted "into spending on social services". While it calls for cuts to military spending, it is happy to leave the armed forces standing, only calling for the disbandment of the Special Air Service.

There should be no illusion here, either, that the VS results represent a qualitative electoral break for the Marxist left. While getting a handful of decent votes, these remained in single percentage digits - and the vote for the Senate across the whole of Victoria was 1.49%. The politics taken to the election are barely distinguishable from the petty bourgeois, left-reformist Green Party: justice for renters, action on climate change, justice for Palestine, fight the far right, people before profit. The language used by VS is more left-wing, highlighting that there is a class war within capitalism (even Warren Buffet has made that point), but the policy platform is liberal-economistic reformism.

It is telling that its electoral offering is to the right of the aims stated on its website: a common fault of Laborism. And even amid these aims there is no clarity on how the working class can win power. Instead, you get this vague formulation: "*Australia's constitution, government, legal system and state institutions originate in British settler-colonialism, were built on the dispossession and genocide of Aboriginal people and are geared to serve the interests of capitalism. Consequently, they must be replaced.*"

Vashti Fox speaks at May 25th meet & greet of the WA (West Australian) Socialists. Photo: Victorian Socialists FB

Righto. But this misses out how these are to be replaced and with what - two things that might come in handy.

The VS believes it is a potential short cut to mass politics based on left reformism. It challenges the Labor Party, but on the basis of left Laborism.

Socialist Alternative's journal *Marxist Left Review* in 2019 covered the launch of the Victorian Socialists the previous year. Author Liz Walsh wrote:

"*In contrast to many other new left formations, the Victorian Socialists was not established as a 'broad party' aiming to become the primary vehicle through which socialists organise interventions into union, social and political struggle ... The party is more akin to an electoral front, with participants primarily uniting around the concrete goal of electing a socialist to the state parliament.*" [MLR No. 18, *Launching Victorian Socialists*]

Here there is a similarity to the attitude of the Socialist Workers Party in Britain to the Socialist Alliances a generation ago: keep the ambition limited to electing someone to parliament; socialist 'interventions' elsewhere should be done by the 'real party' through other 'united fronts'. And the electoral effort is a 'united front of a special type', as John Rees dubbed it.

Partyism

But perhaps life is already getting away from this. While Socialist Alternative argues that Victorian Socialists will be limited to an electoral front, VS's constitution says it will use "workplace organisation", "community organisation" and "political organisation" (for elections) to win its aims. This could create a trajectory beyond this limited vision. Buoyed by its relative success in pushing three electoral results above the background static that most socialist candidates receive, Socialist Alternative believes it is seizing the moment to create a national electoral vehicle for the non-ALP left - one that it controls.

Success, of course, is relative. Socialist electoral initiatives to the left of the Labor Party rarely break above single digits in terms of percentage votes. And, while the VS got a credible vote share in three seats, it can hardly claim to have broken into the big time. For instance, the Green Party has been stuck at about 10%-12% of the national vote all this century.

In the Senate elections, the VS list attracted just over 61,000 votes from the 4.2 million electors in the state of Victoria (1.51%). This is barely above the level of the 'cosmic microwave background' - the static noise in the universe leftover from the Big Bang - although it is higher than the Socialist Alliance received in New South Wales (0.25%), Queensland (0.63%) and Western Australia (0.24%).

What is most interesting about this move, is not the size of the vote, modest as it is, but the partyist logic inherent in what Socialist Alternative is attempting. What is even more remarkable is that SA - which emerged from the four-way split of the Cliffite International Socialists in Australia during the 1990s - is declaring a Socialist *Party* that allows public factions - previously unthinkable for this tradition. ■

Homosexuality & the Penal Code

Representatives: Understandable is the position of those who, deeply offended by certain distasteful aspects of our public and private life, endeavour to make the fullest use of the criminal code to remedy these evils and wipe them off the face of the earth. My friends and I are also prepared to second a large number of the provisions which Dr. Spahn and his colleagues have proposed in the draft before us, but by no means all. On the one hand, this draft goes too far from our standpoint, and on the other, not far enough. In particular, once reform has been accomplished in this area, we should have to consider whether there may not be still other comparable provisions of our penal code that have at least as much right and as much need to be revised as the paragraphs here proposed.

Gentlemen, the penal code exists to be enforced — that is to say, so that the authorities who have the primary responsibility for maintaining compliance with and respect for the law should be dutifully watchful for violations and act accordingly. But there are provisions of our penal code, some of them contained in the motion before us, where the authorities, although fully aware that these provisions are systematically violated by a great number of people, men as well as women, only in the rarest cases bother to call for action on the part of the prosecutor. Here I have particularly in mind the section with the provisions of Paragraph 175 — it has to do with "unnatural fornication". It will be necessary, if the Commission is elected — and I do urge that one be, because in my opinion this bill cannot become law without the Commission's recommendation — that then the government of Prussia be specifically requested to remand to us certain material which the local Berlin vice squad has at its disposal, so that on the basis of an examination of the same, we may ask ourselves whether we can and should retain the section with the provisions of Paragraph 175, and, if we should, whether we should not have to expand them. I am informed by the best sources that ***Continued on Page 28***

Heterosexuality, Patriarchy & Gender relations

While the Left correct to identify patriarchy as a weapon of oppression against women, many remain confused on what role heterosexuality and the family plays in patriarchy, exactly. ***Anthony Furia*** *explains.*

Reactionary "Party for Freedom" organiser Nick Folkes (centre) at a "Straight Lives Matter" rally, 2017. Photo: ABC News

Since the emergence of the new left in the 1960s, debates have raged surrounding the position of patriarchy and heterosexuality in relation to one another, in relation to gender, and in relation to queer and women's struggle. Here, we attempt to clarify the nature of some of these relations through an appeal to the relations of labour, and thus the social division of such labour, upon which social production and reproduction are based. In moving to define what, precisely, 'patriarchy' and 'heterosexuality' are in this context, we can begin to comprehend their relationship, and thus the relationship of the struggles mounted for emancipation from them; the queer and women's movements.

Patriarchy here can be understood as the total structure which reifies and enforces relations of social reproduction/production and an exploitative division of labour, thereby defining and imposing gender itself in terms of this material basis. Patriarchy, as with any exploitative social division of labour and its accompanying relations, operates in both ideological and repressive terms. In a repressive sense, patriarchy is embodied in the state and social structures which place women within the domestic sphere, encouraging their isolation in the home and dependence upon the family form. Such structures further reify and define woman as domestic Other through the oft-subliminal imposition of 'feminised' labour; work paid at lower rates, pertaining to labour often performed domestically with the primary aim of social reproduction (cleaning, cooking, nursing, teaching, rendering sexual and 'romantic' or emotional services).

Ideologically speaking, patriarchy is intertwined with the underlying ideology of production/reproduction defined by contemporary capital. Here, it serves the needs and ends of such a system in presenting the woman's role as simultaneously particular and unique – a necessary other, and in fundamental distinction to the role of man – the subject, the self, the essential, primary market actor. Woman and man are thus interpolated in wholly distinct, yet necessarily mutually defining and dependent ways by patriarchal ideology. The subjects that operate in feminised labour, in the domestic sphere, and those that work in the sphere of 'true' production, who drive economic activity and (supposedly) market orientation, are shaped and created based on gender, itself determined and defined by such a division of labour. In repressive, material terms, a woman is a woman because she performs a particular role and social function – and, ideologically speaking, she performs this particular role and function because she is a woman.

The lines, of course, are far from as clear cut as they are outlined here. The specific role of a woman in social production and the division of labour is, in practice, defined by a vast collection of relations, and thereby functions – some of which may be absent, or some particularly present, in each case. Yet the overarching qualitative distinction between the position of man and woman (on the basis of, and as the basis of, their manhood and womanhood) remains in play; defined by their relation to the domestic and public spheres, and thereby their overall role in production and reproduction.

Heterosexuality occupies a similar position in relation to social reproduction as the question of patriarchy. Demonstrably, heterosexuality depends upon gender, and thereby patriarchy, for its composition and meaning. Any interrogation of this distinction

between sex, gender, and sexuality will ultimately come up against (in the abstract) the superficial imposition of the contemporary lines drawn between the three. Heterosexuality, understood at its most basic, is the complex through which social reproduction in terms of the production of labour-power is assured under a capitalist mode of production.

Heterosexuality maintains its hegemony as the normative mode, the agent, of sexual relations precisely on the basis of the bourgeois family unit, with which it exists in a reciprocal relation. For capital, the most effective means to ensure both the reproduction of a gendered division of labour (and thereby gender), and labour-power itself is through a necessarily hierarchical organisation of domestic life. The family, in placing the father in a position of supreme control and worth relative to the mother (in ideal terms a stay-at-home carer confined to the private realm) and the children (property of both mother and father), is the very form such an organisation takes.

Thus, the hegemonic position of heterosexuality serves to ensure the continuation of the family form itself, through playing a critical role in the ideological interpolation of man and woman as gendered subjects. Man is defined in part by his sexuality, by his violent, controlling attraction to women. Woman, for her part, is defined by her attraction to men in a position of simultaneous subordination and, often, unattainability.

Yet simultaneously, the perfectly heterosexual woman is desirable for her capacity as a carer, as a mother, for her fulfilment of the very relations that define 'woman' to begin with. The perfectly heterosexual man is similar; he is 'desired' (when this is permitted, in particular forms) by the woman because of his position as a 'breadwinner', a successful, independent, driving agent of economic productivity and market action, who can facilitate the confinement of the woman to the private domestic sphere. A heterosexual complex thus operates and carries out patriarchy (patriarchal relations and thus patriarchal ideology), in the realm of partnership – in sexual and romantic relations necessarily embodying productive and reproductive ones – and in turn within the family unit.

In clarifying and sharpening the two of them, we see here that their necessary entanglement is undeniable: Where the heterosexual regime works to extend and reinforce patriarchy, it is also utterly dependent on patriarchy for its content and form. Heterosexuality relies upon the patriarchal division of labour, upon the isolation of the woman in the domestic sphere and her definition on the basis of such labour relations, for its own justification in the same instance as it perpetuates such a division. If there is no woman or man, no gender predicated on a particular division of labour, there can be no heterosexuality. Yet, in contemporary capitalist society, without a hegemonic heterosexuality which enforces the family as the primary unit of social reproduction, the particular division of labour that the family unit imposes comes under question itself. Thus, the patriarchy as it manifests itself concretely leans upon heterosexuality, just as heterosexuality finds its very identity in patriarchy.

This, however, does not absolve 'homosexual' relationships of the possibility of participating in the heterosexual regime, at least in the bourgeois democracies of the western world. In institutionalizing 'gay' marriage as such, bourgeois liberal democracies have done their best to co-opt and sublate those aspects of supposedly subversive sexual identities deemed palatable enough to social reproduction and heterosexuality generally. The homosexual monogamous couple who has kids (one way or another), who conforms in some sense to the patriarchal division of labour, in which one partner is 'feminised' in terms of the tasks of social reproduction and domesticity, resides semi-comfortably within the liberal democracies of the imperial core. Semi-comfortably, of course, as they are only acceptable so long as social reproduction is not threatened existentially, and so long as they conform precisely to the expectations of patriarchal heterosexuality in all but sex.

What, then, does this mean for the relation between the emancipatory struggles precisely associated with the struggles against heterosexuality and patriarchy respectively? The queer and women's struggles are as mutually inter-dependent as their respective enemies. If a heterosexual regime is irreversibly intertwined and defined by a patriarchal order, and vice versa, the revolutionary struggle against both shares a common enemy on the very basis of their entanglement; gender. Gender, and thereby the social division and relations of labour upon which it is defined, must be overcome for the emancipation of women (the revolutionary subject defined precisely by such a force) and queer people (those who defy gender, either

explicitly or in defying the heterosexual regime).

If a democratic society is to be built, if exploitation is to be brought to an end and society freed from class, gender must itself be overturned. In basing our analysis in the material, in the concrete in the form of relations of production and reproduction, we make possible the end to such relations – and thus to the exploitation and repression they produce and are defined by. Historically, the 'mainstream' of women's and queer movements have not acknowledged this political truth, or have done so only partially, or in vague terms. The queer movement of the 21st century has contented itself largely with the struggle of the sexual and the romantic – of the elements most capable of assimilation into a heterosexual regime of social reproduction and thereby a patriarchal division of labour.

The greatest struggle of the homosexual couple in the 21st century has been the struggle for the right to perform heterosexuality, to perform gender, to participate in social reproduction. Similarly, the struggles of the contemporary women's struggle have remained uneven and divided in goals and intentions. Some proclaim woman as biologically sacred, as defined by an innate, unchanging sex, and worthy of 'equal treatment' precisely because of their position in terms of social reproduction. Such a position is highly regressive, and antithetical to the emancipation of women in its very positing of the exploitative position of women in labour relations as somehow worth preserving or maintaining. What is bad for such feminists is only the material 'excesses' that result from this position; the domestic violence, murders, and sexual assault. Others in the women's movement openly refute such a position on the sanctity of womanhood, yet hold to it in practice, in centring struggle solely upon the aforementioned 'excesses', and not on the very basis of women's oppression; the imposition of gender, and thus womanhood itself, in a patriarchal division of labour.

All of this is, of course, far from satisfactory for queer or women's liberation. The true proliferation and acceptance of identities that defy and are in fact antithetical to the particulars of the family form and the gendered division of labour can only take place through an end to such a division of labour, and thus through an overcoming of exploitation itself; through proletarian revolution, and the governance of society by itself. It is up to communists to show the road forward and take the first step. ■

Continued from Page 25 the police of that city do not bring the names of men who commit offenses which Paragraph 175 makes punishable by imprisonment to the attention of the district attorney as soon as they have become aware of the fact, but rather add the names of the persons involved to the list of those who for the same reasons are already in their files.

The number of these persons is so great and reaches so far into all levels of society, that if the police here scrupulously carried out their duty, the Prussian State would immediately be compelled to build two new penitentiaries just to take care of those offenses against Paragraph 175 that are committed in Berlin alone.

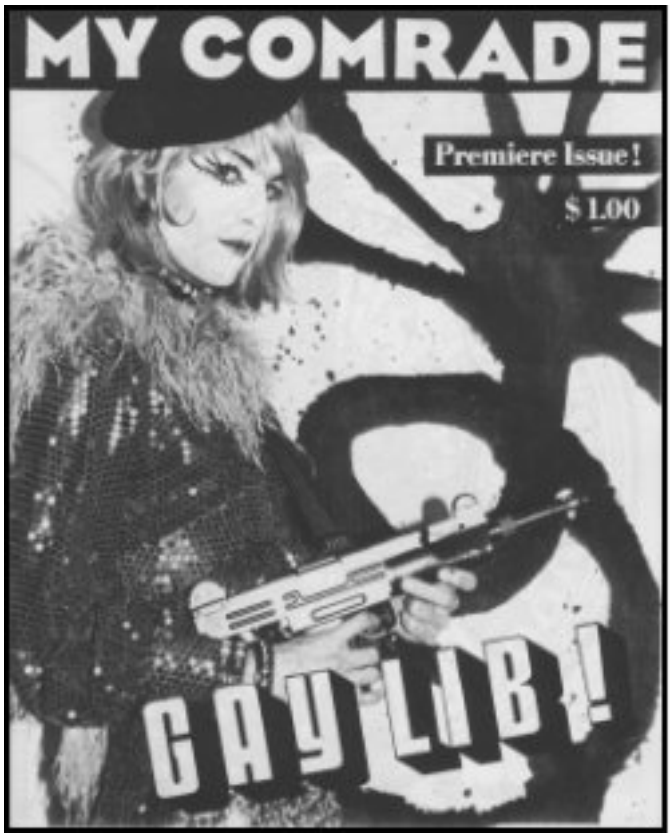
That is not an exaggeration, Herr von Levetzow; it has to do with thousands of persons from all walks of life. But then it further raises the question of whether the provisions of Paragraph 175 should apply not only to men, but also to women who on their part commit the same offense. What is just in the case of one sex, is fair for the other. But gentlemen, I'll tell you this: if in this area the Berlin police did their duty all the way — I want to say a word about this — then there would be a scandal such as the world have never known, a scandal compared with which the Panama scandal, the Dreyfus scandal, the Lützow-Ledert and the Tausch-Normann scandals are pure child's play. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the offense punishable under this Paragraph is treated with such extraordinary laxity on the part of the police. Gentlemen, Paragraph 175 is part of the penal code, and because it is there, it must be enforced. However, if for whatever reasons this part of the criminal law cannot be enforced, or can be enforced only selectively, then the question arises whether this provision of the penal code can equitably be retained. I wish to venture that in this very session — perhaps some of the gentlemen may not yet have taken note of it — we have before us a printed petition signed by me personally, among others, and by a number of colleagues from other parties, and further by people from literary and academic circles, by jurists of the most illustrious standing, by psychologists and pathologists, by experts of the highest rank in this field. The petition, for reasons that understandably I don't wish to go into fully at this moment, advocated a revision of the penal code so as to repeal the relevant provisions of Paragraph 175. ■ **August Bebel, 1898**

Eros Bound: Sexuality & the Class Struggle

In the midst of a world-wide attack against the democratic rights of LGBTQ+ people, particularly in the liberal-democratic countries. Under a regime of heterosexual hegemony, ***Edith Fischer*** *answers the question: is gay liberation still subversive?*

The blind, all-embracing, demanding passions will weaken; the sense of property, the egoistical desire to bind the partner to one "forever," the complacency of the man and the self-renunciation of the woman will disappear. At the same time, the valuable aspects and elements of love will develop. Respect for the right of the others personality will increase, and a mutual sensitivity will be learned; men and women will strive to express their love not only in kisses and embraces but in joint creativity and activity. The task of proletarian ideology is not to drive Eros from social life but to rearm him according to the new social formation, and to educate sexual relationships in the spirit of the great new psychological force of comradely solidarity.

- from **Make Way for Winged Eros**, Alexandra Kollontai



'Premiere issue' of Linda Simpson's *My Comrade*

The lights flash on as the music abruptly stops. The room of party-goers is violently ejected into the streets as the police frisk the joint under a flimsy pretense. Gays are intimidated, while a couple of queens get up in the coppers face. You would be forgiven for thinking that such a scene might have taken place at Stonewall in 1969, or in Melbourne in 1994. Maybe even in Moscow or Jakarta, where raids like this are a regular occurrence in bars and bathhouses. However, in this case, the raid is on a gay bar in Pittsburgh, and the only difference is that one of the cops asks one of the queens for a selfie while they raid the joint.

Is gay liberation still subversive? This question has probably never been more relevant than now. A global anti-gay, anti-transsexual political wave is in full swing, and its sights are set on winding back 30 years of mainstream sexual liberalism in the advanced capitalist countries. For militant gays of all kinds, the question of how to organise against this wave, and how to deliver that still elusive promise of gay liberation, is central. To get to the heart of the matter, we must rearticulate what made gay liberation so subversive in the first place. In short, we must articulate a theory of sexual hegemony.

The dominant cultural structures of a given society are always that of the dominant mode of production. This is true of the ideological and cultural apparatus, as it is true in law and politics (the juridico-political structure). It is also true in the sexual structure - the ideological, political, and economic structures of a given society structure the daily sexual activity of society, and the ways in which that sexual activity is regulated. This structure, in which the sexual regulation of a given ruling class becomes imposed on society as a whole, can be understood as "sexual hegemony" - a term coined by the late Christopher Chitty in the book of the same name.

The Development of Sexuality in Capitalism

The development of capitalism as the prevailing mode of social production was not simply the replacement of handlooms by mechanical ones, of home industries and small workshops by foundries, blast-furnaces and machine-operated factories, or the fact that men had to move from country to town in pursuit of employment. The present advanced

stage of the conquest of nature by technology results from a series of 'impulses' spread over several centuries, but at the same time the means had to be found to keep the process going without periodic impulses from outside, and a social personality had to be developed capable of guiding the process while at the same time remaining completely subordinate to it.

- from **Sexuality and Class Struggle**, Reimut Reiche

In the epoch in which the capitalist mode of production comes to predominate, capital in both the historic form of the bourgeois class and in the abstract form of money-power, come to regulate sexual life. Reimut Reiche, in his excellent **Sexuality and Class Struggle** (1968) argues over the course of capitalist development, two distinct but intertwined sexual logics develop, allowing for a dynamic contradiction in which one is dominant over the other. We can identify these with classical Freudian terminology: **repressive sublimation** and **manipulative integration/repressive desublimation**.

The initial epoch of capitalist development, in which the primary problem of capitalist expansion was the deferral of consumption for the purposes of investment, the dominant sexual ethic was one of repressive sublimation. In short, sexual impulse (which we should understand as naturally occurring but unformed) should be repressed and sublimated into productive activity. It is this psychic structure that gave rise to what Erich Fromm termed an "authoritarian-masochist personality" - and what Reich diagnosed later as being the psychic profile of the fascist in the epoch of capitalist crisis (see: **The Mass Psychology of Fascism**). The dominant ideological structures of North-Atlantic Capitalism - Protestant-Calvinist Work Ethic and Classical Political Economy, both resented the scrounger, the idler, and the spendthrift. What is true of money, in capitalist society, is also true of affection, and the passions of men were seen to be a dangerous force that needed discipline.

In the Italian city-states and in the Low Countries of the Dutch Republic, the feudal-patriarchal regulation of peasant sexuality through religious life gave way to a civic repression of homosexuality. In order to control the disproportionately male slums and docks, the Good Men of the City would drown homosexuals and others accused of sexual degeneracy. The belief that the body was a machine that needed to be regulated, with desire as its prime mover, was not alien to this era. In **Caliban and the Witch**, Silvia Federici shows how these same ideas permeate contemporary intellectual culture, such as in the works of Descartes and Hume. Modern homophobia then can be understood alongside the repression of midwifery and the raids upon brothels and dance halls - a means to maintain social order for the benefit of economic development. The birth of capitalism brought forth a new conception of the human: a body-machinic, with destructive but conquerable passions.

This structure of repressive sublimation dominated capitalist society well into the 1950s. However, structural crises of overproduction and underinvestment had begun to permeate the imperialist economies. Falling prices of consumer durables and the expansion of automobile ownership gave rise to sprawling suburbs, and drove up the consumption of workers in the wealthiest nations. A new culture was emerging - that of consumerism and individual expression that was well documented by thinkers like Marcuse and Debord. The Society of Spectacles necessitated a new sexual morality. For Reiche, the sexual liberalism that was born in the 1960s was a transformation within the logic of bourgeois sexual hegemony, not against it. What emerged as a new form of manipulative integration. Sexuality was now to be part of social life - however, it would be for the purposes of consumption.

In the structure of manipulative integration, the previously repressed socio-sexual drives are expressed through a bourgeois-dominated consumer culture. Mass Culture, brilliantly theorised as the cultural production in the epoch of advanced capital by Theodor Adorno in **Dialectic of Enlightenment**, becomes the chief means by which this integration is achieved.

One Dimensional Men

The high standard of living in the domain of the great corporations is restrictive in a concrete sociological sense: the goods and services that the individuals buy control their needs and petrify their faculties. In exchange for the commodities that enrich their life, the individuals sell not only their labor but also their free time. The better living is offset by the all-pervasive control over living. People dwell in apartment concentrations- and have private automobiles with which they can no longer escape into a different world. They have huge refrigerators filled with frozen foods. They have

1972 demonstration by Gay Liberation Front.

dozens of newspapers and magazines that espouse the same ideals. They have innumerable choices, innumerable gadgets which are all of the same sort and keep them occupied and divert their attention from the real issue- which is the awareness that they could both work less and determine their own needs and satisfactions.

- from **Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud**, Herbert Marcuse

The result of this new form of sexual logic is a hollow, one-dimensional form of sexual freedom. In the most advanced capitalist countries, there seems to be no real structural limits on the free expression of sexuality. In fact, the new culture of sexual openness seems to be unlimited. However, behind the scenes structural factors continue to shape sexual life.

Today, sexual activity has been reduced to a simple exchange, one usually mediated (as are many of our contemporary purchases) over the internet. The sexual encounter comes to mimic capitalist production - industrially produced, well advertised, perfunctory, and increasingly cheap. This sexual marketplace, which is the long consequence of the end of the arranged-marriage system that dominated in most class societies, produces new anxieties - the mirror image of this one-dimensional flatness is a cultural fixation on romantic love - the bourgeois form of romantic ideology, supplanting the courtly love of prior epochs.

Where desire was once seen as a dangerous force that necessitated control, now it is seen as a consumptive force - one must fuck, in the same way that one must purchase commodities. Desire is a passion that can be harnessed for the promotion of new needs - this is indeed the force that the entire unproductive complex of advertising seeks to master. Sexual dynamics increasingly appear to be a form of market relations. In this, the atavistic culture of inceldom contains a rational kernel, in the Hegelian sense. It is the ideology of aggrieved surplus males in an increasingly lonely and isolated epoch.

The source of this loneliness is manifold, but we should recognise that it is somewhat located in the separation of spheres promoted by bourgeois civilisation. As Max Fox notes for *Pinko*,

Thinking of sexuality as a moment of liberalism, a mode of apprehending capitalist society as divided into apparently natural spheres expressed by the state and the market, explains some of the confusion over the meanings of taboo, prohibition, liberation, and pleasure. After his wartime Los Angeles exile, Theodor Adorno returned to Frankfurt having made close observation of this midcentury sexuality and its industrial marriage from within one of its new leading economic zones. He characteristically finds in it a false freedom: "Talk of sexual taboos sounds anachronistic in an era where every young girl who is to any extent materially independent of her parents has a boyfriend; where the mass media, which are now fused with advertising, incessantly provide sexual stimulation, to the fury of their reactionary opponents, and where what in America is called a healthy sex life is so to speak a part of physical and psychic hygiene," he writes in a 1963 essay, "Sexual Taboos and the Law Today." This hygiene involves "a sort of morality of pleasure, a fun morality," the experience of an illusion of liberation—but a necessary one, an illusion internal to the form of appearance social existence must take in capitalist society. If patriarchal mores of restraint have been made obsolete, now "sexuality, turned on and off, channelled and exploited in countless forms by the material and cultural industry, cooperates with this process of manipulation insofar as it is absorbed, institutionalized, and administered by society." Far from having freed sexuality, bourgeois society after the wars has taken sexuality "directly under its control without any intermediate authorities like the church, often even without any state legitimisation." ***(What Was Sexual Liberalism?**, 2024)*

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This is not to say that sexual freedom did away with the prior social rule of Kinder, Küche, Kirche. Even at its most "liberated", or perhaps we could say "legible", bourgeois civilisation is still fixated on the nexus of individuality, property, and national destiny that is the family, and in particular the lives of children. In his excellent article in The Baffler entitled **Why Gay Liberation Failed**, Scott Branson points out that it is this very fixation on the protection of children-as-property that has given rise to the present sexual panic.

Sexuality and Class Struggle

Gay liberation then, was subversive not because there is anything particularly dangerous about fags. In fact, it is not the activities of homosexuals, but rather the perceived threat to heterosexual life - to Straight Society - that is most feared. Gay liberation, at its most radical, threatened the sexual hegemony of the bourgeoisie - it posed a political threat to the family, to the state, to religion, and ultimately to the organisation of social life for capital.

For those today who seek to draw out a connection between sexuality and class struggle, we should look to the works of Reiche. He was critical, if supportive, of the attempts to emancipate sexuality of his own day, but understood that without connecting sexual politics to the struggles of the international working class, there is no future for sexual liberation. In his time, he looked positively upon the works of Wilhelm Reich, who was perhaps the first to attempt to fuse sexual politics to mass, revolutionary social democracy.

Through the SexPol mass organisation, Reich established sexual health clinics in working class neighbourhoods, promoted safe sex, and sexual equality between men and women. The need to advance working class sexual health, and promote an independent sexual politics, remains salient, even when sexual education has been integrated into bourgeois sexual hegemony. This kind of mass work should inspire our orientation - sexual freedom cannot be won by preaching a new sexual morality (albeit a libertine one). Instead it must bring people something they substantially need. Thus, organisation around labour concerns, the organisation of collective housing, the establishment of youth organisations, developing consciousness around the sex question, all have a place in developing a genuinely mass movement for sexual liberation.

The most vital immediate task in building a new sexual politics is the restoration of social life. Mediated by the structures of digital capital, a sexual politics free of bourgeois hegemony cannot possibly hope to flourish. Restoring mass working class organisation, and bringing forward a sexual politics within it, can restore the social spaces in which people can meet, love, and yes, fuck.

Traditionally, the parties of mass, revolutionary social democracy, saw sexuality in purely negative terms - it must be freed of legal constraint, but otherwise it is not a political concern. This view is as shortsighted as it is narrow. The role that sexuality, as the structuring force of desire, plays in the creation and recreation of dominant forms of ideology is fundamental. It must be systematically and critically examined, and a proper orientation towards it must be developed. The Communist Party, being the highest expression of the historical consciousness of the working class, must take all things under its gaze and analyse them from the standpoint of the class struggle. Sex, for all its blushes and blemishes, is no different. Only the international working class, with an international communist party at its head, can sweep aside the muck of ages, and usher in a new epoch of social development. In turn, only this revolution can finally make way for Winged Eros. ■

Why socialists must support gays

IN CLASS-INFESTED society there is oppressor and oppressed in all walks of life. Employer oppresses employee; man oppresses woman; white oppresses black; old oppresses young; heterosexual oppresses homosexual.

The true socialist is able to overcome all these divisions. An engineering worker who can only identify with other engineering workers may be a good trade unionist but he has not proved himself to be a socialist. A socialist has to be able to identify with the struggles of all oppressed groups.

We are all the children of capitalism, so we tend to conceive of the future – even the socialist future – in an ordered and hierarchical way.

It is as though the socialist revolution will be led by the Father of the Chapel in the print union, the NGA working on Fleet Street. Second in command will be an AUEW Convenor Section 1 from the toolroom in a big car factory. The lieutenants of the revolution will all be forty-year-old white male shop stewards.

If there is enough space then we'll allow blacks and women and gays to take part – providing they stand quietly at the back!

A lot of socialists still have difficulty believing that gays will be taking part in the revolution at all. On the contrary, we should took forward now to the first leader of the London workers' council being a 19-year-old black gay woman!

The system rules by dividing us. This means there is no natural way by which one oppressed group identifies with another. The most racist extremists in the Southern States of America are the poor whites – not the rich whites.

In the same way blacks do not automatically support women and women do not automatically support blacks. Gays will not automatically support other oppressed groups. The Nazis sent thousands of gays to concentration camps. In Chile gays were castrated and left bleeding on the street.

But it is not true that, even given these facts, gays automatically become anti-fascist. Tens of thousands of gays supported Hitler. Many were in the Brownshirts. After Hitler took power he turned on the gay support and slaughtered them in the Night of the Long Knives.

How can we explain gays joining the Nazis? If you are an oppressed gay putting on a Nazi leather jacket and leather boots gives you for the first time a sense of power. It makes it easy to put down Jews, women and anyone else.

For any oppressed group to fight back there is need for hope. If you are on the way down you feel despair. You look for a victim to kick. If you are on the way up you look for a back to pat. That's why only by building a socialist movement can you unite workers with oppressed blacks, women and gays.

And that's why it is so important for gays to organise for demonstrations like at Brick Lane and to feel able to identify themselves proudly as gays and – where possible – as revolutionary socialist gays.

Karl Marx wrote that capitalism unites the forces of opposition. But it also divides us. We have to struggle consciously for that unity. We are one – all of us together – but only when we fight together. ■ **Tony Cliff in Socialist Worker no. 583**

Write us a letter!

Writing us a letter is easy, and is a good alternative to writing a full article or essay. Letters are submitted like normal articles are, through our email. A letter could be any kind of statement or observation, in around 500 words or less. The shorter the better. In a letter, you should give your opinion or statement on something, then finish off with your name and city (any name works - many of our writers use pseudonyms). In particular, we encourage letters written as a reply to other articles. Of course, you are also free to write a full article in reply to another article, but sometimes it may be better to simply write a letter in. Letters may also be replies to other letters, and of course, an article can also be a reply to a letter.

You could also write one directed to the editorial team at Partisan, and if you do, we will submit a reply in the following issue. We aim to build a lively letters section as part of our overall goal to establish Partisan as a platform of open debate and polemic between and amongst the organised Left. Letters should be sent to partisanmagazine@proton.me and contain the subject "Letter: [heading]". The content of your letter can be sent within the body of the email as opposed to a document attached to the email. ■

Letters

Khalil's election win a loss for the Palestine movement

Revmira, Melbourne

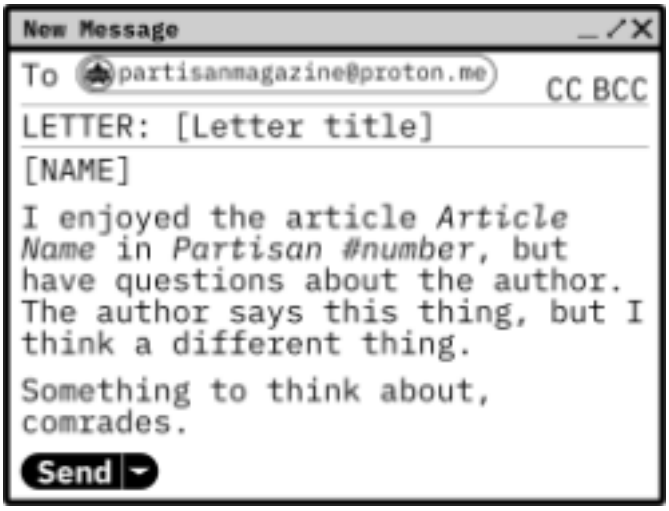
Peter Khalil has been re-elected as the member for Wills. After a long vote count, the swing to the Greens and the Socialist Alliance/ Victorian Socialists coalition (but I repeat myself) has not proven large enough to take him down.

This can be understood as one thing and one thing only: A decisive defeat for the Palestine movement in Australia and a total repudiation of the program, strategy, and politics that dominates it.

Khalil became a major target of the movement due to his rabid Zionism, deep connections to the NATO-ANZUS political order, and the role he took as the "Special Envoy for Social Cohesion". To the Melbourne Palestine movement, Kahlil took on this role as the 'Great Satan' of the ALP – his name became byword for treason and lapdogs of the America-Israel alliance. On election night, Palestine organising chats were blowing up across Melbourne with the near singular focus on Wills, hoping against hope that they had managed to knock on enough doors and leaflet enough houses for Khalil to lose his seat, and that Samantha Ratnam would be swept into parliament.

They were wrong. Khalil is back in. Not out of the evils of the voters of Wills, or the lack of radical enough action, but because the Palestine movement in this country has abjectly failed to have a material impact on Australian politics in a positive manner – let alone the genocide in Gaza which, notionally, we mobilise to stop. There was no positive program put forward, just a routine series of denunciations of the ALP, the LNP, and occasional stump speeches for the Greens. The socialist movement which threw itself into this struggle liquidated their politics, organisational independence, and their strategy.

The entire struggle had a policy of tailing the liberal leadership of the rallies. They left radicalism to infantile ultras, whose radicalism devolved into nothing more than wrecker behaviour. Notionally the largest socialist groups in Australia did nothing to genuinely organise against this genocide, there was no attempt to use the growing struggle within the unions to force a split from the Labourite politics of the leadership – Socialist Alliance flat out called for a vote for the Greens in the WA state election. There was never any attempt to cohere a socialist and proletarian pole – not under the banner of a sect, let alone under a united banner of the movement.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I enjoyed the article Article Name in Partisan #number, but have questions about the author. The author says this thing, but I think a different thing.
Something to think about, comrades.
Send

Now, of course, a genuine break with the Greens, and a split in the class, can only emerge with the existence of a unified Communist Party that unites the most politically advanced layers of the Australian proletariat. We can go nowhere without a Communist Party because without the party we are nothing. Without a strategy to reforge it, and a strategy on how to win the fight for Communism, we are less than nothing.

The Left has not advanced a strategy throughout the entire duration of the bombardment of Palestine. Every rocket that has fallen on Gaza has done so without the need to worry about the international proletariat standing up to stop it. The socialist and the Palestine movements in Australia need to sit down, analyse the barriers that are facing us and the actions we have taken, and ditch the dogma we cling too. 0.000% of communism has been built – the left has been shattered, and it revels in that.

Let the swamp camp in Peter Kahlil's office; the communist movement has a task before it. It must focus itself on constant rigorous analysis and an unrelenting proletarian strategy.

Either we break from the Greens, from Laborism, and fight for communism, or we wither away into irrelevance like the rest of the swamp.

Those are the options facing the Australian left. The choice needs to be made yesterday. Those who choose poorly shall consign themselves to the dustbin of history. ■

Nothing to celebrate about tailing liberalism

Max J, Newcastle

In an op-ed for the CPA's The Guardian (Guardian #2145, Nothing to celebrate about ALP win), Newcastle CPA's Aidan Young makes what is essentially a critique against the RCO, the Spartacists, and others in the communist movement. This in itself is not much to write about. We should instead look to the content of Young's op-ed and how it reflects on the CPA's politics.

Firstly, Young claims that "some socialists" consider the ALP's election win a "victory for working Australians". It would be beneficial if Young could point to a single socialist who claims this. Young uses Lenin's 1913 writing [Lenin: On Australia, 1913] on Australia to justify her stance on calling Labor a bourgeois party (something we would not disagree with her on). She quotes Lenin as writing: "The Australian Labour Party does not even call itself a socialist party. Actually it is a liberal-bourgeois party, while the so-called Liberals in Australia are really Conservatives."

This is correct. In fact, Lenin's position was that the Labor Party was a bourgeois workers party. This is the position that the RCO, the Spartacists, etc, uphold (but maybe not to the letter). And this is a position that, strangely, Young is arguing against. Young continues by listing all the bad things the Labor Party has done. Few in the communist movement would deny this. Fewer still would defend it. Both the RCO and the Spartacists have been openly against the administration forced upon the CFMEU, with the Spartacists openly agitating against it to Labor members.

"Evidently, the 'Labor' party is only a party of the unions and working class in name, and a party of the liberal bourgeois in deeds." We don't disagree here. Young continues: "Some socialists concede this point, but still find a way to support it through hackneyed justifications that 'it has a large working-class base,' which

"Nothing to celebrate about ALP win"

With the Australian Labor Party gaining a record majority in the House of Representatives, Anthony Albanese winning another term as Prime Minister, and the Liberal Party being in a state of utter disrepair, it can be easy to celebrate the recent election as a victory for working Australians, as some socialists are doing.

"The Labor party is the party of the unions and working class," these socialists say, and aren't they correct? Their name is literally the Australian Labor Party. Which capitalist country has had a 'Labor' party in charge without threatening the capitalist enterprise? The answer to this rhetorical question is Australia.

Lenin says the following in his 1913 article, 'In Australia':

"The Australian Labour Party does not even call itself a socialist party. Actually it is a liberal-bourgeois party, while the so-called Liberals in Australia are really Conservatives."

112 years later, this is still true. In their previous term, the so-called 'party of the unions' has placed the CFMEU under dictatorial administration, given tax cuts to the ultra-wealthy, refused to raise the rate of JobSeeker, and has enabled the ongoing genocide of the Palestinian people through the permitted sale of crucial weapons parts. Evidently, the 'Labor' party is only a party of the unions and working class in name, and a party of the liberal bourgeois in deeds.

Some socialists concede this point, but still find a way to support it through hackneyed justifications that 'it has a large working-class base,' which has led to it being termed a "bourgeois liberal workers party," a contradictory title and gross perversion of Lenin's words. This nonsensical title is then used to justify opposition to The Greens and even 'entryism' into the Labor party (i.e. socialists joining the ALP and trying to make it socialist from within, by taking leading positions). To these socialists, while the Labor party is a "bourgeois liberal workers party," the Greens are "a party of middle class reformers." We would not disagree with the latter statement, as it is true. However, if The Greens are "a party of middle class reformers," the Labor party is a party of bourgeois neoliberals, as evidenced by their deeds. Entryism into the Labor party would be nothing less than an ill-fated grasp at relevance while making little to no change in the actual party structure.

Whatever happens in the way of 'entryism' or 'change from within,' the ALP will carry on the way it has. One of the most militant unions in Australia continues to be forcibly suppressed, the ultra-wealthy continue to grow wealthier, Australians continue to starve or go homeless, and Palestinians continue to be killed with the assistance of this Labor government. ■ **Aidan Young for The Guardian (CPA), May 19th 2025**

has led to it being termed a "bourgeois liberal workers party," a contradictory title and gross perversion of Lenin's words." Far from being a "gross perversion" of Lenin's words – it is Lenin's words.

Lenin writes: "The leaders of the Australian Labour Party are trade union officials, everywhere the most moderate and "capital serving" element, and in Australia, altogether peaceable, purely liberal". Earlier in this article, he refers to Labor as "the workers' representatives" – clearly, this means Lenin viewed the Labor Party as a workers party, but one with a liberal leadership. Ergo, a "liberal workers party".

We hold Lenin's position while tempering it with the last 100 years of political developments in Australia. Labor has changed as a party since Lenin was writing. We do not cite Lenin as gospel to justify our politics. Young continues: "This nonsensical title is then used to justify opposition to The Greens and even 'entryism' into the Labor party (i.e. socialists joining the ALP and trying to make it socialist from within, by taking leading positions)."

No one in the RCO supports or endorses entryism into the Labor Party. Perhaps Young has encountered RCO members who have espoused this viewpoint – however, if she has, she fails to name or reference them. You would be hard pressed to find a member of the RCO who believes that socialists should join the Labor Party to "make it socialist". On the contrary – we believe that communists must fight for socialist politics in all avenues of the struggle, whether amongst the rank-and-file membership of the Labor Party, in the unions, in the social movements, or on the campuses.

We oppose the Greens on the same grounds that we would oppose any other leftish reformist party: they are not armed with a program capable to leading the working class to emancipation. Her position here also goes against the official positions of the CPA itself. Which is not a problem in itself, however, given the framing of this piece, it is rather strange. Per the CPA's program: "The CPA will fight for a government of people's unity [...] It would be made up of the political representatives of all the progressive, democratic and patriotic forces, from socialist and labour parties, trade unions and progressive community organisations of all kinds, small working farmers, professional and middle class circles." Such a government, as outlined on Page 47 of the CPA's Program (Amended 2017), would presumably include the Labor Party, or at least sections of it.

Overall, Young fails to make a convincing argument that "some socialists" are wrong to advocate for "Labor entryism". This is especially true when you realise that the CPA are more or less jockeys for the Greens. We saw recently that the CPA fell in behind the Greens, supporting the Greens holding "balance of power in the senate" (Guardian #2142, Page 3). While they also called for a vote for "progressives" and socialists, that they primarily called for a Green vote says enough about the CPA's electoral stances. As opposed to putting forward communist candidates, they instead want someone else's party to win. Anna Pha and Marcus Browning of the CPA write: "The Greens were the only ones putting forward policies that actually address many of the issues facing the working class [...] Their policies provide a genuine alternative to the Lib/Lab failure to govern in the interests of the people, but in this election the media made sure almost none of them saw the light of day." (Guardian #2144, Labor has no mandate). What about Socialist Alliance? What about the Victorian Socialists?

So, the CPA tails liberalism in the form of tailing the Greens, but other socialists are to be attacked for suggesting that the Labor Party is a bourgeois workers party. The Spartacists, for example, aim to fight for socialist politics within the Labor Party. This, in the minds of Young and the CPA, is "bad". They don't explain why this is bad, beyond pearl clutching about how bad and evil the Labor Party is. But, it seems, entryism into and tailing the Greens is fine and good. Only one word can describe this trend: ultraleftism.

The inability to name who is being critiqued shows a startling lack of confidence, in that they do not directly point out who they are critiquing, whether this is because they can't defend their critique, or they can't direct it at any specific force in the communist movement. The CPA-ML acted similarly when they replied to a letter published in Partisan about the imperialist defence policy of the Greens – which, much like Young's piece, kicked up a big fuss about nothing in particular.

We invite dialogue with the CPA – but the CPA needs to be willing to engage seriously with the politics of others, instead of picking fights with people who don't exist. ■

Criticism & Political education
Mila V, Canberra

There has been a constant and revolving conversation in the pages of the Partisan over the question of how socialists should relate to

non-socialist social movements. I would like to weigh into these discussions and, hopefully, clarify their stakes.

Recently, comrades Anthony, Porco, and Edith have fought over the rallies from a few months ago that protested violence against women. They were arguing whether or not socialists should make scathing critiques of reformist or reactionary elements in the movement at the current stage. Porco [Partisan #8, Build a communist women's movement! But how?] argued that we shouldn't, because many at the protests have a justifiable suspicion of socialists based on the past behaviour of the sects who, Porco argues, didn't (and still don't) take feminist struggle seriously. At this stage, where socialists stand primarily outside such movements, we should make more effort to insert ourselves into them before making big criticisms. Anthony [Partisan #8, Stop killing women! But how? & Partisan #9, Building a movement requires criticism] and Edith, on the other hand, claimed that hiding such critiques is a mistake, because reformist and reactionary views within the movement do not disappear over time, and it is the job of socialists to correct these deviations and put the movement on the right path.

Months ago, a similar prosaic conflict arose between comrades Edith [Partisan #3, Reject the dumbness of dumbing down] and Brunhilda [Partisan #2, RCO needs more than just theory] over the content of political agitation. Brunhilda argued that socialists spend too much time talking about what, at times, can feel like ancient history. Socialists should try to relate the distant horizon of revolution to everyday hardships and struggles here and now, she claimed. For Brunhilda, focusing so much on history is a manifestation of a socialist movement made up primarily of intellectuals and students, not of workers, who are more interested in sectarian infighting than in winning over the class. On the other hand, Edith argued that discussing the successes and failures of past revolutions, or educating workers on complex theoretical concepts, is the very stuff of socialist political education, which should never be dumbed down.

These conversations have been frustrating to witness. Everyone involved has ignored the real insights offered by those they disagree with, dismissing their entire argument because of some perceived error. Though comrades have been correct to criticise one another for their errors, this has led to a 'missing the forest for the trees' type situation.

Edith was spot on when she criticised Brunhilda for advocating for the dumbing down of socialist political education. However, she missed the point of truth in Brunhilda's letter. It is critical that we educate other workers on complex material phenomena, history, and theoretical concepts; but we must do so accessibly. Comrade Edith seems to be of the impression that criticising another comrade's rhetoric as 'inaccessible' is automatically arguing for the dumbing down of their rhetoric. This is often the case (that is what Brunhilda was advocating for), but it need not be. It is extremely important for socialists to make their political education as accessible as possible through use of language, or by relating it to everyday struggles, without compromising on content. This is not only possible for us to do, but also necessary.

Similarly, Anthony and Edith were totally correct to criticise comrade Porco's argument that we should moderate our criticisms of factions within the feminist movement. Even if we are somewhat split from the feminist movement (though the RCO put an enormous amount of organising effort into it in Brisbane), there will always be those within it who are sympathetic to our criticisms of it. We must always be openly critical and openly advocating for revolution, regardless of our perceived distance from the movement.

But, as before, comrades Anthony and Edith missed the substantive insight in Porco's letter. Anthony and Edith, in their struggle against tail-ism, have forgotten that pure criticism is pedagogically unsound. Any qualified educator with an interest in revolutionary pedagogy will tell you so. Though we must constantly criticise the supposedly 'anti-elitist' pretensions of the sectarian socialists, who truly believe that the working class is stupid and incapable of understanding socialism, it is also true that people simply struggle to learn without some sense of solidarity.

Rhetorically speaking, comrades often forget to emphasise that we socialists are on the side of women, the working class, etc. Reactionary trends deserve total condemnation, yes, but we must take a different attitude to the reformist-minded and less politically educated elements of the social movement.

As things stand, we present our perspective from a place of total superiority. Such people often have the same goals as us in some abstract sense – ending violence against women, improving access to healthcare, ending police brutality, etc. We must be sympathetic to these goals.

Rather than telling them that reform is

useless, that revolution is the only way, and ending things there; we must couch our revolutionary criticism in the goals we share with them. We must point out that their strategies will not achieve what they want them to. "Reform is useless, and revolution is the only way, because otherwise we cannot end violence against women, improve access to healthcare, or end police brutality; don't you want that?"

In the same way that we must make our education accessible, but not simple – we must make our criticism sympathetic, but without flattery. In everything we write on the social movements, we must stress that our criticisms emerge from a faction of that movement, not from outside of it. We must endeavour to engage in these movements. Socialists must always consider themselves part of the "we" of feminism, queer liberation, and indigenous struggle. ■

What are we condemning when we condemn political violence?

Anonymous, Online

In his 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', Walter Benjamin wrote: "The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule."

He wrote this as a German Jew fleeing Nazism. He escaped to Spain from Vichy France but he arrived to find the Spanish police deporting Jewish refugees. Believing that he would be imminently deported and returned to Nazi hands he committed suicide in September, 1940.

For 595 days, the Israeli massacre inflicted on the people of Gaza defies description. It is a crime which we have witnessed through the glowing rectangles of our phones, and yet still cannot understand. It is incomprehensible. It is barbarism.

Israel drops bombs on refugee camps, canteens, schools, hospitals, and yet many act like nothing is happening. While the protests around Gaza continue, and people attempt to build some kind of political momentum in Australia, the situation worsens, with no conceivable end in sight. They assassinate children.

Where are the Arab nations? Where are the western countries who meekly called for a ceasefire, or a humanitarian pause? They glower silently at a world historic atrocity. Total famine is being perpetuated by this terror state. Australia grumbled recently that Israel should allow humanitarian aid into Gaza.

But now that a man, unable to metabolise the international gaslighting any longer, has taken it upon himself to shoot two Israeli embassy officials in Washington DC, we must listen to ludicrous condolences and revived condemnations of antisemitism.

Communists condemn political adventurism, especially of the type that Elias Rodriguez felt necessary. But we must try to understand the impulse that led this spontaneous shooter to act.

The mass movement around Palestine is not sustaining itself. The repression is working. Some people are beginning to feel as if violence is their only "moral" option.

Yet, the only people that this violence affects, other than the two Israeli embassy workers gunned down in the street, is the entire American pro-Palestine movement.

Condemnation is a sordid position. Communists struggle to properly condemn capitalist power and the socio-political currents that directly led to these killings. We have no immediate power to change society. What is happening in Gaza is a holocaust.

Our condemnation of Elias can only be understood as a condemnation of ourselves, of the world, of capitalism, and of a humanity that finds itself continuously tied up in contradiction.

So I will not condemn him. I will rather return to Walter Benjamin, who describes the angel of history in his theses:

"A Klee painting named 'Angelus Novus' shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. ... This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past.

Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet.

The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them.

The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress."

Progress and regress are two sides of capitalism's revolutionary contradiction. Communists will never succeed if we cannot elucidate this contradiction. No amount of violence, no amount of chants, or condemnations will slingshot us towards victory. There is still so much work to do. ■

Queer (adj)

2 sometimes disparaging + offensive

a. of, relating to, or characterized by sexual or romantic attraction to members of one's own sex